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YOUNG PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCES OF AND MEANS OF COPING WITH VIOLENCE IN NORTH AND SOUTH KIVU, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

CLAUDIA LUCIA SEYMOUR

Thesis submitted for the degree of PhD in Development Studies

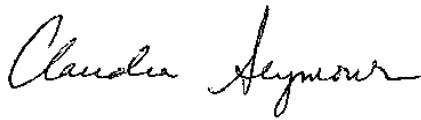
2013

Department of Development Studies
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University of London

Declaration for PhD thesis

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A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Claudia Seymour'.

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Thesis abstract:

This thesis is an interdisciplinary exploration of young people's experiences of and means of coping with violence in the provinces of North and South Kivu, eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. It engages with psychological resilience theory, the anthropology of violence, and structural analyses drawn from sociology to explore how young people cope with their experiences of violence. It establishes an analytical framework based on a 'structures of violence' perspective, through which young people's processes of coping are examined at the individual level, as well as through social relations, political processes and the international political economy in which young people are embedded. By examining young people's individual coping mechanisms, the thesis demonstrates how coping tactics may be effective in the short term, but may lead to longer term risks. Considering how social support networks have been transformed by violence, the thesis demonstrates how patronage relationships remain an essential aspect of young people's coping processes, even as they reinforce their positions of weakness and dependence. Through an analysis of processes of meaning attribution, the thesis also considers how identity-based, victim-perpetrator discourses and blame can serve a psychologically protective role in helping young people make sense of violence, even as these meanings contribute to the conservation of violence. Finally, the thesis critiques international child protection responses, showing how morally-driven international interventions which valorise vulnerability and victimhood contribute to strengthening the structures of violence in the Kivus.

The qualitative methodological approach used for this research has relied primarily on the documentation of young people's narratives and participant observation; data was collected from more than 300 young people during fieldwork which was conducted in 2010 and 2011. The research has additionally been influenced by the author's experience of living and working in the Kivus between 2006 and 2011.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS:

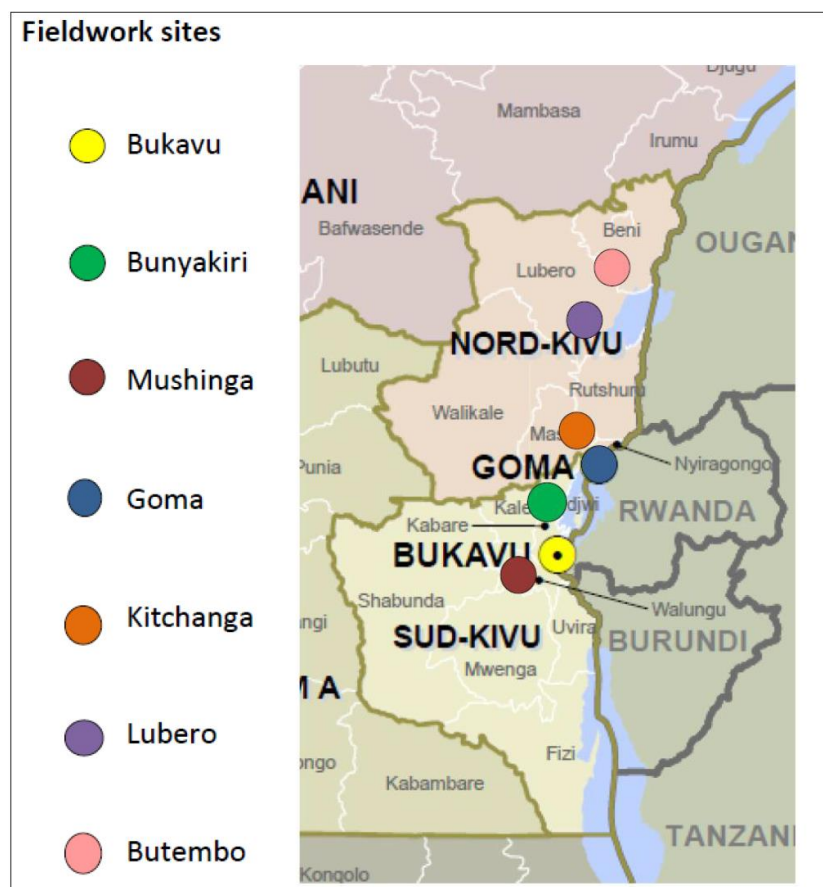
AFDL	<i>Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo</i>
ALiR	<i>Armée de Liberation du Rwanda</i>
ANC	<i>Armée Nationale Congolaise</i>
CNDP	<i>Congrès National pour la Défense du Peuple</i>
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
DDRRR	Disarmament, Demobilisation, Repatriation, Resettlement and Reintegration
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
FARDC	<i>Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo</i>
FAZ	<i>Forces Armées Zairoises</i>
FAR	<i>Forces Armées Rwandaises</i>
FDLR	<i>Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda</i>
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ICC	International Criminal Court
MONUC	<i>Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies en République démocratique du Congo</i>
MONUSCO	<i>Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies pour la stabilisation en République démocratique du Congo</i>
MRM	Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism
M23	<i>Mouvement du 23 mars</i>
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
PTSD	Post-traumatic Stress Disorder
RCD	<i>Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie</i>
RPA	Rwandan Patriotic Army
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

Figure 1: Map of the Democratic Republic of the Congo



Source: UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (2011)

Figure 2: Map of fieldwork sites



Source: UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (2011)

CHAPTER 1: EXPERIENCES OF VIOLENCE IN THE KIVUS

PROLOGUE

Locating eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in today's popular imagination usually involves descriptions of destruction and violence, notions of immense natural resource wealth and a vague sense of the dark heart of human suffering.¹ It is a region that has long been affected by protracted violent conflict, exploitative resource extraction and often brutal authoritarian rule (Young 1965, Reno 1998, Nzongola-Ntalaja 2002, Prunier 2009). In contemporary international discourse, the DRC is commonly referred to in terms which emphasise the extremes of violence experienced there. It is a place where 'storylines of violence' (Eriksson Baaz and Stern 2010) form a complex web of suffering, hardship and adversity, described by some as "the world's deadliest humanitarian crisis" (Coghlan et al. 2006, p. 44) and by others as "the rape capital of the world" (BBC 2010).

In the Kivus, war is a way of life (Prunier 2009) and violence is more often considered to be a normal state of affairs rather than an aberration from an otherwise peaceful situation. In a context which exemplifies Appadurai's (2006, p. 31) notion of "quotidian war, war as an everyday possibility", young people have lived all or most of their lives in conditions of violence. This thesis explores how young people living in North and South Kivu provinces experience such constant violence. It is an examination of how they are able cope with violence that is so entrenched in history, politics, economics and the 'everyday' (Kleinman 2000), and how their experiences of violence influence the way they engage with their present, consider their past and envision their future.

To examine young people's coping processes, this thesis initially engages with psychological resilience theory. Defined as "a relatively good outcome despite the experience of situations that have been shown to carry a major risk for the development of psychopathology" (Rutter 2000, p. 653), resilience is a Western psychological concept which aims to explain how people effectively cope with and adapt positively to conditions of risk and adversity. Also a study of violence, this thesis examines the multiple expressions of violence in the Kivus, analysing how they interconnect and feedback on each other. It builds on Bourdieu's theory of the 'law of conservation of violence', or "the inclination to violence that is engendered by early and constant exposure to violence" (Bourdieu 2000, p. 233), by demonstrating how violence is conserved and transmitted through young people's coping mechanisms. By considering how violence is conserved and transformed through history and through the social relations, political processes and international political economy in which young people are embedded, this thesis supports Bourgois' (2001, p. 29) contention that "people do not simply 'survive' violence as if it somehow remained outside of them"; rather, violence becomes incorporated into their way of perceiving and experiencing the world.

Going beyond psychological resilience theory, this research has been particularly influenced by the sociological literature on structures and agency and the anthropological literature relating to war, structural violence and young people living in contexts affected by conflict. The analysis of violence is

¹ This opening line has also been used in Seymour (2012b, p. 376).

also informed by the political economy literature which interrogates the functions of violence, while insights from politics and international relations have offered a wider perspective on violence in the DRC and supported a critique of international child protection interventions there. Historical perspectives have complemented the analysis of violence and highlighted the importance of memory in the transferral of violence across generations.

This research emerged from my earlier work as a child protection professional in multiple conflict-affected sub-Saharan African countries, where I served in various capacities with the United Nations (UN) and several protection-based non-governmental organisations (NGOs). In the DRC specifically, I worked with the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations as a Child Protection Advisor, and subsequently in support of the UN Security Council-mandated Group of Experts on the DRC.² Among my responsibilities in these positions was to monitor, report and investigate grave violations of human rights, including the involvement of children in armed groups and sexual violence (see Seymour 2012b, p. 373- 374). These experiences were formative for me, and guided my initial entry into this research project in two fundamental ways.

Firstly, I came to appreciate how much more complex and nuanced young people's experiences of violence were compared to that which was assumed by the child protection regime, the responses of which were based on the assumption of young people's weakness and vulnerability. Contrary to these projections of weakness, the young people who I came to know over the years impressed me with their capacities to cope with experiences of violence and adversity in ways that defied expectations. Appreciating their strength and creativity, I became increasingly interested in learning about their actual experiences of war and the strategies they used to survive the challenges of each day. Secondly, I came to understand the great contradictions of the international protection regime, which, in its promotion of absolutist discourses about 'inalienable rights', tended to ignore the complex historic and socio-economic dynamics leading to the violation of rights and thus contributed to the avoidance, denial and obscuration of the deeper, structural and political causes of violence and abuse. These perspectives steered my early research towards resilience, and provided the foundations for my critical analysis of the role of international protection actors operating in the Kivus.

I lived in eastern DRC for a total of 40 months between 2006- 2011.³ Through my professional experience there, I was provided with an 'insiders' view of the international protection and child protection regime operating in the DRC. My work involved high levels of access to government and military leaders, as well as to commanders and elements of the various armed groups, contact which gave me an in-depth perspective on the military dynamics of the conflict at the time. As a child protection actor, one of my main responsibilities was to interview individuals- children and adults- and to document their experiences of violence in the Kivus. Between 2006 and 2011, I interviewed and held discussions with approximately 1,800 people in my professional capacity.⁴ On a personal

² As mandated by UN Security Council Resolution 1857 (2008).

³ Although most of the data used in this thesis was collected when I was an independent PhD research student, some of the data which features in the thesis emerges from my work when I associated with the UN or an international NGO. To be sure that the reader is aware of my positionality at the time of data collection, I clearly note if the data was collected when I was affiliated with an NGO or the UN (i.e. UN, War Child UK, War Child Holland, or Save the Children UK); if no such identifying note is made, then the data was collected when I was an independent research student.

⁴ As a MONUC Child Protection Advisor, I interviewed more than 300 young people separated from armed groups, plus at least another 200 parents, community leaders and authorities. With the UN Group of Experts I conducted interviews on a daily basis with various actors involved in the conflict, as well as with 80 young people separated from armed groups, 40 FDLR elements, and more than 150 people who

level, my experience in the DRC was deeply enriched by the generosity and kindness of many Congolese people, some who became friends and who served as a constant source of support, guidance and insight throughout my time in the DRC- and beyond.

Perhaps above all, my time in the DRC taught me that the extreme difficulties and challenges defining life in the Kivus are not merely a local problem, but rather reflect a “problem of joint humanity” (Stearns 2011, p. 327). Throughout my fieldwork, I found that distanced academic objectivity was not easy, especially when listening to stories of intense human suffering. I would struggle with feelings that lay somewhere between rage and despair as young people shared their accounts of terrible violence with a sense of quiet and defeated acceptance. At other times I was at a loss to respond to their questions. One of my research participants who had become pregnant following the rape by an unknown armed man asked me: “*Madame* Claudia, what if you had been raped? Would your husband keep you? Would he protect you?” As I struggled awkwardly through an answer she continued with her questions: “If you’d become pregnant from the rape, would he still love you? Would he care for the baby?” By using as much as possible the lens offered to me by my young research participants, I have been able to reflect on experiences of violence in ways which were personally challenging and often humbling. I have also been able to reflect more honestly on my own role within the structures of violence operating in the Kivus.

In this way, this thesis situates itself within the body of engaged social research which tasks itself with rendering visible the “erased and unexpected linkages between violence, suffering, and power” (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004b, p. 318). Through the narratives of young people, it aims to contribute insights into the structures of violence which dominate life in the Kivus and offers reflection on the kinds of changes that would be needed if these structures might ever be altered.⁵ At the same time, it is self-conscious of the risks associated with studying human experiences of violence. As noted by Kleinman (2000), there is a danger of the researcher becoming:

caught up in a confusing and morally dangerous process of commodification and consumption of trauma. We require ever more detail of hurt and suffering to authenticate the reality. Over time, as the experience of representations of human misery becomes normative, we alter the social experience of witnessing from a moral engagement to a (visual) consumer experience. We consume images for the trauma they represent, the pain they hold (and give?). The implications of that change are deeply compromising to the very idea of existential responses to human conditions... (ibid, p. 232)

Throughout, I have attempted to heed Kleinman’s warning, and I hope that the material contained in this thesis portrays the narratives and perspectives of my research participants in ways they would consider honest and worthy of their involvement.

had been displaced by violence or who had witnessed grave human rights violations. During the research consultancies I conducted for War Child Holland and War Child UK I interviewed approximately 400 children and adults. With Save the Children UK, I interviewed or convened focus group discussions with more than 600 people. With Oxfam GB, I interviewed an additional 30 UN and NGO workers on behalf of the DRC Protection Cluster.

⁵ As noted by Duffield (2007, p. 233- 234): “The principles of mutuality and interconnectedness provide a chance to rediscover politics as a practical interrogation of power.... [Instead] of educating the poor and marginalized, it is more a question of learning from their struggles for existence, identity and dignity and together challenging the world we live in.”

STRUCTURES OF VIOLENCE

A 'structures of violence' analytical framework has been established by this research to examine the highly complex and interacting forms and processes of violence which dominate life in the Kivus. It has been inspired by Bourdieu's contention that there exist "objective structures independent of the consciousness and will of agents, which are capable of guiding and constraining their practices" (Bourdieu 1989, p. 14). Rather than attempt to retell a condensed version of a story that "is so horribly complex, so contradictory" (Prunier 2009, p. 357)- a story that has in any case been extensively documented elsewhere (Willame 1997, Mararo 1997, Mamdani 2001, Vlassenroot 2002, Pottier 2002, Reyntjens 2005, Prunier 2009, Autesserre 2010, Stearns 2011), this opening chapter provides a brief overview of the violence in the DRC from a structures of violence perspective, including structural violence, founding violence and political violence. The analysis also describes how a functional political economy explanation of violence in the Kivus coexists with identity-based, victim-perpetrator discourses.

STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE

While most accounts of violence in the Kivus tend to focus on militarised political violence- i.e. the "targeted physical violence and terror administered by official authorities and those opposing it" (Bourgeois 2001, p. 8), there is a far more pervasive type of violence which affects everyday life. Although my research participants had each experienced the losses and the destruction associated with war- losses which were clearly manifest in their narratives, their memories, and their perspectives for the future- political violence represented only part of their experience. According to the young people participating in this research, "violence is everywhere" (focus group discussion, Bukavu, April 2010), and they would easily identify the multitude of violences which affect them each day: insecurity, assassinations, rape and theft were only the first their long list of everyday violences which included injustice and impunity, unemployment, hunger, poverty, sickness and children not being able to afford school fees.

Structural violence is defined as "chronic, historically-entrenched political-economic oppression and social inequality" (Bourgeois 2001, p. 8), often described as that violence which "does not show" (Galtung 1969, p. 173). Yet for my research participants, structural violence is anything but invisible- it is a central aspect of their everyday experience. It defines their perspectives and prevents them from realising the aspirations they might have for a better future in what they described as "this dead Congo" (focus group discussion, Bukavu, June 2010). For my research participants, the structural violence defining their everyday is explicitly visible; it is palpable, constraining and suffocating. The conditions of poverty in all its forms- the lack of jobs, the inability to pay school fees, the lack of medical care or the inability to afford it, the absence of clean water or functioning sanitation, the authorities at all levels who use their positions of power to extort whatever resources they can, and the incapacity of their parents to provide the material and emotional support that young people need- are observable and inescapable for young people in the Kivus today.

By imposing profound limitations on the possibilities for human self-realisation (Galtung 1969), structural violence in the DRC contributes to a situation in which young people are well-aware of the limitations proscribing their lives, yet are unable to do anything about them. As will be elaborated

upon further below, what my research participants had the hardest time coping with is the structural violence of the everyday, the conditions of poverty which make their daily survival so difficult, the lack of opportunities to find a dignified means of earning a livelihood, and the bleak horizons of a future that will likely either offer much of the same, or worse.

As structural violence is highly visible and palpable in the lives of young people in the Kivus, the notion of the invisibility of structural violence should be re-examined to question: invisible to whom? Such an analysis of structural violence thus needs to be taken to a political and international level, as those who do not see, or those who choose to obscure structural violence- such as Congolese political leaders or international humanitarian aid actors, as will be discussed below- are also those who have the power and the influence to engage with and to alter the structures of violence founding and framing life in the Kivus. For Congolese political leaders and entrepreneurs benefitting from political violence, the wilful not-seeing of structural violence allows for a convenient distraction and diversion of attention away from the benefits they may be gaining from violence. For international humanitarian aid actors, the invisibility of structural violence helps to obscure the irrelevance and ineffectiveness of their interventions in actually contributing to the well-being of people in the DRC. Inadvertently or otherwise, maintaining the invisibility of structural violence contributes to its conservation and to strengthening of the overall structures of violence.

FOUNDING VIOLENCE

The second form of violence to be considered within the structures of violence framework is 'founding violence' (Das 2007, see also Girard 1977), which serves as the foundation upon which the structural violence described above is built. Looking at history to understand how the present comes to be is an essential step towards making sense of contemporary violence (Farmer 2004 cited Mintz 1985) in the DRC. Aware that there is a risk in placing too much importance on the violence of the colonial past or of making the living "victims of their own history" (Jackson 2005, p. 371), any analysis of contemporary violence in the DRC requires some attention to the lasting impact of Belgian rule. The founding violence on which the Congolese state was built dates back to at least the 1885 Berlin Conference when the delineated Congo Free State was placed under the personal rule of King Leopold II of Belgium. Initially governed under a regime of great brutality in order to maximise the extraction of rubber and copper wealth, the Belgian state eventually took over in 1908, maintaining its priority on the extraction of natural resources (Hochschild 1998).

The great natural resource wealth and land fertility of the Kivus was actively exploited during the colonial period. Between 1920 and 1955, an estimated 100,000 people from Ruanda-Urundi were forcibly displaced into the Kivus (Jackson 2007) to work the farms and mines in the territories of Rutshuru and Masisi in North Kivu (Pottier 2002, Jackson 2007). Labelled 'non-native' by the colonial authorities and considered 'foreign' by the 'autochthonous' populations, these newly settled Banyarwandans- or 'people of Rwanda', also termed Rwandaphones- were denied legal access to land and protection by the colonial Native Authority (Mamdani 2001). Without the traditional protection offered by the Native Authorities, labourers arriving from Ruanda-Urundi were left in a precarious position as they benefitted from no protection at the local level and were unable to hold land (Mamdani 2001, 2011). From this early stage, possession of land and accordance of citizenship became tightly linked with identity politics, laying the foundation for future violence in the Kivus.

This land-citizenship-identity complex (see Prunier 2009) formalised during the colonial period was transposed into the independence era and served as a highly effective tool for political and economic manipulation. President Mobutu Sese Seko, who came to power in 1965 and ruled Zaire⁶ until 1996, used competition over land and contentious identity and citizenship politics as key strategies for maintaining his influence in the restive eastern provinces. To increase his political support base in the Kivus, Mobutu passed the Citizenship Decree in 1972, according citizenship to all Rwandaphone people who had arrived on Congolese territory before 1960 (Jackson 2007). This reversed the colonial legislation which had designated citizenship based on proven ancestral presence in the territory delineated as Congo in 1885. Subsequently, Mobutu's Bakajika land reforms of 1968- 1973 led to the passage of the 1973 General Property Law in which all land formerly owned by private Belgian interests was nationalised. This land, primarily in Masisi and Rutshuru territories, was sold to individuals favoured by Mobutu- mostly Kivu-based elites of Tutsi identity who had previously been excluded from land ownership (Mararo 1997, Mamdani 2001, Raeymaekers 2010). In this way, Mobutu gained the much-needed political loyalty in the restive Kivu periphery, helping to consolidate his rule over the vast Zairian nation.

By the early 1980s, however, the power balance had shifted. Non-Rwandaphones- or 'autochthonous' Zairians who considered themselves to be the only legitimate owners of the land (Jackson 2006)- were successful in pressuring Mobutu to repeal the citizenship rights of anyone who could not prove their ancestral presence in the Congo prior to 1885, thus also rescinding their possibility of owning land. This 1981 Citizenship Law excluded a large proportion of the Rwandaphone population settled in the Kivus and thus led to a fission in the Banyarwanda community: Rwandaphone Congolese living in the *Hauts Plateaux* of South Kivu declared their Banyamulenge identity (Banyamulenge translating as 'people of Mulenge', the hills of the Itombwe, South Kivu) and the Congolese Hutu of Rutshuru distinguished themselves from other Rwandaphones by claiming a historical presence in the Kivus for more than a century (Mamdani 2001).

The identity-based political violence which had simmered in the 1960s and 1970s worsened in the 1980s and 1990s as the process of 'democratisation' imposed on Mobutu by Western governments gained momentum (Nzongola-Ntalaja 2002). The *Conférence Nationale Souveraine* (CNS) convened by Mobutu in 1991-1992 provided a forum for further mobilisation and division along ethnic lines (Nzongola-Ntalaja 2002), rallying 'autochthonous' Congolese against 'Rwandan foreigners' (Jackson 2007). To distract his opponents and divide any credible opposition (Stearns 2011), Mobutu increasingly relied on 'ethnicised' political strategies (Prunier 2009, p. 78). Inter-ethnic violence especially affected the Kivus, where fears of the demographic strength of Banyarwandans led other ethnic groups to increasingly mobilise along identity lines (Clark 2008a). Particularly concerned with the democratic weight of the large Hutu population in the planned 1993 local elections, the North Kivu governor encouraged Hunde and Nyanga youth militia to kill Banyarwanda Hutu in Walikale, Rutshuru and Masisi (Mamdani 2001). In the early 1990s, up to 10,000 people were killed and an estimated 250,000 others were displaced in North Kivu alone (Mamdani 2001, Clark 2008a).

⁶ The Democratic Republic of Congo has repeatedly changed its name: Under King Leopold it was called the Congo Free State which then became the Belgian Congo in 1908. At independence it was named the Democratic Republic of Congo, a name which was reinstated in 1996 following the end of Mobutu's rule. From 1965- 1996 it was called the Zaire.

POLITICAL VIOLENCE

It was into this highly-charged conflict dynamic that, in the wake of the 1994 Rwandan genocide, an estimated one million Rwandan Hutu refugees arrived in the Kivus. Prior to the genocide, approximately half of the four million people living in North Kivu were of Banyarwandan descent, with the majority of the Hutu population living in the territories of Masisi and Rutshuru (Mamdani 2001). With the arrival of more than one million Rwandan Hutu refugees fleeing the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) capture of Kigali, the tenuous ethnic balance in the Kivus was further destabilised. Among the refugees arriving in eastern DRC were approximately 30-40,000 former *Forces Armées Rwandaises* (FAR) and *Interahamwe* militia, who, importing their Hutu-power ideology from Rwanda, gathered local support in their attacks against the Congolese Tutsi population living in Rutshuru and Masisi territories (Mamdani 2001).

Although contemporary narratives explaining political violence in the Kivus usually begin with the 1994 Rwanda genocide, the genocide fed into an already tense and specifically Congolese political situation in which identity-based politics served as a powerful tool for further mobilisation to violence (Pottier 2002). As a result of the tenuous, pre-existing ethnic balance, the resource-rich provinces of North and South Kivu consequently became the launching grounds for what would become “Africa’s World War” (Prunier 2009), two consecutive wars which involved nine countries and lasted for seven years between 1996 and 2003. The first war (1996- 1997) resulted in the toppling of Mobutu by the Rwanda-backed *Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo* (AFDL). The AFDL, led by Laurent Kabila, eventually disintegrated, as the second war (1998-2003) resulted in an effective split of the country, with the eastern provinces, including the Kivus, coming under the control of the *Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie* (RCD), essentially a proxy government for Rwanda (Stearns 2011).

In the ensuing years, allegiances and enmities continued to shift violently. While formal peace was negotiated at a national level in 2003, violence simmered in eastern DRC (Clark 2008a). The presidential elections in 2006 officially ended the ‘post-conflict transition’ period but resulted in renewed political violence in the Kivus. With the support of Rwanda, Tutsi-led elements who had formerly been part of the RCD forces were reconfigured within the *Congrès National pour la Défense du Peuple* (CNDP) and took control of large areas of the Kivus. The *Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda* (FDLR)- a Hutu-based rebel force emerging from the 1994 Rwandan genocide and still locally called the *Interahamwe*- assumed control of others.⁷ At the same time, various Mayi-mayi groups- or self-defence militia- re-emerged, ostensibly fighting to protect local interests. The national Congolese army- the *Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo* (FARDC)- were badly organised, poorly paid and largely demoralised (Eriksson Baaz and Stern 2010) and thus struggled to assert any form of territorial control. The conflict dynamics were further complicated by

⁷ The *ex-Forces Armées Rwandaises* (FAR) were reorganised as the *Armée de Libération du Rwanda* (ALiR), eventually transforming itself into the FDLR in 2000. Over the years, the dynamics of the conflict in relation to the ex-FAR/ALiR/FDLR have changed significantly. While the AFDL fought against the ex-FAR/ALiR in alliance with the RPF during the 1996- 1997 phase of the war, the split of the alliance in 1998 led to Laurent Kabila’s intermittent joining of forces with the ALiR/FDLR against the RPF in the second phase of the war. Over the years, FDLR elements were integrated into local society, married Congolese women and recruited Congolese nationals. Although they established strong control over key mining and trade routes and often operated brutal local taxation rackets, the FDLR were mostly tolerated by the local population (based on interviews I conducted on behalf of the UN, in Goma, Bukavu and in Rwanda, 2009). Since 2006, the FDLR has opportunistically supported FARDC advances against the CNDP, or joined with local Mayi-mayi groups against the FARDC (Prunier 2009, Stearns 2011).

the deployment of a large United Nations (UN) peacekeeping mission- first established in 1999⁸- and by the massive presence of international humanitarian aid actors.

Between 2006 and 2009, alternating battles and negotiations led to the CNDP eventually being recognised as a political party. Although maintaining its parallel lines of command, the rebel movement was integrated into the FARDC in March 2009 as stipulated by the internationally-backed Goma Peace Agreement (ICC Women 2009).⁹ Between 2009- 2011, CNDP commanders - now integrated into the FARDC- were deployed throughout the Kivus and gained control of the main coltan and cassiterite mining areas as well as key trade routes (Johnson 2009, United Nations 2009). By 2012, high-level commanders of the CNDP split from the FARDC and formed a new movement called the M23. By December 2012 the M23 had regained control of key areas in Masisi and Rutshuru, having once successfully taken over Goma before strategically retreating. Political negotiations with the Kinshasa government were convened in Kampala, although there were no clear outcomes at the time of writing.

FUNCTIONAL VIOLENCE

The third aspect of the structures of violence framework considers violence from a political economy perspective by examining the functional role of violence. A constant factor in Congolese political history, violence has long functioned to gain or maintain control of resources. Since the early period of conquest in the nineteenth century, the Congolese state has been considered as an asset for those in power, and the incentive of governance has been to extract as much wealth as possible for as long as power is maintained.¹⁰ The extremely violent methods of conquest during King Leopold's Congo Free State administration were integral to his strategy of territorial domination and control (Hochschild 1998), an exercise in "ruthless private economic exploitation" which resulted "in a quasi-genocide" of the Congolese population (Prunier 2009, p. 76).¹¹

Violence is considered to be a necessary part of the processes of state building by state formation theory, which holds that political violence functions within a normal trajectory towards an eventually more peaceful and democratic state (Tilly 2003, see also Cramer 2006a).¹² Although Tilly clearly distinguishes processes of state formation in seventeenth century Europe from those in contemporary sub-Saharan Africa, this perspective would consider political violence in the DRC to be part of the transitional process towards global economic integration.¹³ However, the violence which has long prevailed in the Kivus confounds this theoretical application. In support of Leander's (2004) contention that war does not necessarily lead to peace in the contemporary globalised era, it is evident that linkages between violence and international capital flows instead strengthen local

⁸ The *Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies en République démocratique du Congo* (MONUC) was established in 1999. In 2010, the UN peacekeeping mandate was adapted and its presence in the DRC reconfigured within the *Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies pour la stabilisation en République démocratique du Congo* (MONUSCO).

⁹ Signed on 23 March 2009, the date for which the M23 rebel movement takes its name.

¹⁰ The image of a decayed Congolese state broken down by years of dictatorial rule and war- a state which requires "rebuilding" (Reyntjens 2005)- is based on a fictive notion that there ever was a stable and functional Congolese state entity in which strategies of rule were not based on violence.

¹¹ Describing the nature of the Zairean state and economy in 1986, MacGaffey calls it "parasitic capitalism" (cited Iliffe 1982), where "the dominant class uses state power to acquire property and business" (MacGaffey 1986, p. 143).

¹² According to Tilly (2003, p. 44) "along the way to democratization, struggles often become *more* violent for a while as the stakes rise with regard to who will win or lose from democratic institutions".

¹³ Violent and coercive processes of capital accumulation have been shown to eventually lead to more sustainable systems of wealth-accumulation and job-creation (Cramer 2006b)- that such a process is underway in the DRC is not evident.

power holders in the DRC. Through violence, local strong men are able to control resource extraction, taxation and other means of financing which would otherwise be under the remit of the state. As examined in other contexts and also relevant in the case of the DRC, the central government may allow such a localised and dispersed use of violence to continue as long as it can serve as an efficient “divide and rule strategy that might prove more viable than attempts at centralising and monopolising the means of violence” (ibid., p. 74).

As political violence facilitates the control of natural resources, war thus becomes “a continuation of economics by other means” (Keen 1997, p. 69 cited Clausewitz 1832); in such situations, “prolonging war is as useful as ‘winning’ it” (ibid., p. 70). In the Kivus, violence has become an essential tool for maintaining the mutually-reinforcing feedback system between economic transactions, resource extraction and control of land, including through strategies of population displacement.¹⁴ Relying foremost on the threat or use of militarised violence to control resources and trade routes, a “systematic criminalization of warfare” (Garrett et al. 2009, p. 8 cited Montague 2002) has become the dominant mechanism for exploiting commercial opportunities in the Kivus (Raeymaekers 2010)¹⁵, the wider Great Lakes region (Stearns 2011), as well as at the international level. Violence dominates the economic markets, as “entrepreneurs of insecurity” (Reyntjens 2005, p. 595 cited Perrot 1999) are able to generate significant economic gains.¹⁶

In the Kivus, this economic and functional explanation of violence is widely accepted, and the understanding that violence and economic interests are linked is ubiquitously expressed in popular narratives. Local narrations of resource-based conflicts would often describe the processes of commercial elite relying on armed actors in order to protect their economic interests.¹⁷ As stated by my research participants, “everyone just wants to exploit our resources. The richest and the poorest country in the world is Congo” (focus group discussion, Bukavu, April 2010).¹⁸ According to them, the war is primarily the responsibility of those “who have come to exploit our wealth” (focus group discussion, Bukavu, April 2010) and they were clear in asserting that “Congo’s wealth is what’s killing us” (focus group discussion, Bukavu, May 2010).

¹⁴ Since 1996, population displacement- often along identity-based lines- has been a persistent phenomenon, with at least one million people reported to be displaced in the Kivus at any given time (United Nations 2012a). The use of population displacement as an economic strategy during war has also been documented in Sierra Leone, where displacement was “a kind of joint venture designed to depopulate resource-rich areas” (Keen 1997, p. 71).

¹⁵ A local authority who I interviewed in South Kivu explained the processes through which private commercial interests had been militarised, usually bypassing state authority. Living near the Maroc gold mine in Mushinga, he explained how privatised violence functions in his area of administration: “The Maroc mine presents us with a very problematic case. It is a mine which has been repeatedly affected by conflict over the years. The families who assumed control over the area have rebelled against the government administration with the support of a group of military commanders, even though the land has clearly been delimited to be under state authority since 1972. Since 2007, one family has been able to control the gold with the support of FARDC elements from the 10th Military Region. Soldiers dominate the mines, and people living here in Mushinga are no longer able to mine for gold without paying off the soldiers, who then share the spoils with the controlling family.” (interview, Mushinga, May 2010).

¹⁶ As will be discussed in depth in Chapter 5 below, the gains that come with control of land and natural resources in turn facilitate the creation or maintenance of a political power base which relies on neo-patrimonial largesse for the maintenance of social and political legitimacy (Vlassenroot and Romkema 2007).

¹⁷ Militarisation of private interests has also been documented by Raeymaekers (2010) in his research in Butembo, North Kivu.

¹⁸ The linkages between control of land and identity-based violence were carefully described to me by one of my research participants in Bunyakiri. To clarify the multidimensionality of the historically-founded dynamics of conflict in Kalehe Territory and its competing claims, he presented me with a written list of the various conflicts affecting the area (as written by L-, Bunyakiri, April 2010):

1. Conflict between the traditional chiefs of Mubuku and Mbinga Sud in the High Plateau for control of the local markets;
2. Conflict between the traditional chiefs of Ziralo and Mbinga Nord, between the Batembo and the Bahunde for control of grazing land and mineral resources;
3. Conflict between the Bahavu, Batembo and Rwandaphones all living in the High Plateau and each competing for control of the land.

IDENTITY-BASED VIOLENCE

Yet the functional analysis of violence in the Kivus does not convey the full story. On the contrary, it coexists with much more complex and subjective interpretations of violence based primarily on identity. As will be elaborated in detail in the following chapters, identity-based, victim-perpetrator discourses have great power in the Kivus, as people also make sense of and respond to their experiences of violence by relying on perspectives of victimhood and blame. My research participants explained the origins of the on-going fighting in the Kivus in ways which blurred their pragmatic analysis of contestation over land for control of wealth with a deeply-assimilated identity-based perspective: "The conflict here is about land... The war is being fought for the creation of a Tutsi empire" (focus group discussion, Mushinga, April 2010). The process through which young people incorporate victim-perpetrator narratives of violence into their meaning-attribution processes was explained to me by a local administrator:

[This town] has been the central theatre of so much of the violence in South Kivu. Conflicts over land are old here- the conflicts are between communities and between the various ethnic groups. Young people learn from adults and then assume the same perspectives. Today young people won't know the difference between Hutu or Tutsi, they just hear the Kinyarwandan language spoken and know immediately that these are people who are competing with them for their land. (interview, Bunyakiri, April 2010)

These explanations demonstrate the potent interconnectedness of identity-based discourses and the politics of land ownership which together contribute to the intractability of political violence in the Kivus. As described above, there are two dominant and irreconcilable narratives of violence in the Kivus: either the 'autochthonous' Congolese have had their land appropriated by the 'foreign' Tutsi and Hutu aggressors, or the Rwandaphone Congolese have been denied access to their own land or protection from the state (Vlassenroot 2000a, Clark 2008a, Scott 2008, Prunier 2009).

Rather than seeking to address the historically-founded structural inequalities of land distribution in the Kivus, political entrepreneurs mobilise the population along identity lines, linking identity with survival in order to justify their use of violence. To make sense of and cope with the consequent misery and adversity, people blame opposing identity groups, holding them responsible for their experiences of loss and hardship. This process of meaning attribution is essential in helping individuals to establish "a sense of normalcy and coherence" (Heine et al. 2006, p. 89, as will be elaborated upon below) and allows them to more effectively cope with their experiences of violence. These 'poetics' of violence (Riches 1986, Whitehead 2004), which will be examined in greater depth in Chapter 6, exemplify the great ambiguity of violence in the Kivus.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCES OF VIOLENCE

EXPERIENCES OF VIOLENCE

The structures of violence operating in the Kivus constrain and define young people's lives in profound ways. To introduce the kinds of experiences of violence lived by my research participants, three biographical narratives are offered here. They provide a sense of the context of North and South Kivu and detail the kinds of experiences lived by young people. Through their narratives, it is

possible to gain initial insights into how young people make sense of and cope with the structures of violence.

The first biographical narrative was offered by Emile¹⁹, who was 22 years old when I met him:

I'm the third child of my family. My mother was killed in 2004, my father in 1997. My father used to work at the Kavumu airport [near Bukavu] as a pilot. At the start of the war, soldiers from the FAZ [*Forces Armées Zairoises*] tried to force him to fly a plane from Bukavu to Kisangani; he told the soldiers it wouldn't be possible, that the plane wasn't in good enough condition to fly. Then the Tutsi soldiers [AFDL] arrived at the airport and they took him hostage. We didn't see him again.

We stayed only with our mother then. During the RCD war, Tutsi soldiers came to our house, accused us of having worked for Mobutu, of hiding Hutus in our home. They demanded money from my mother. She said we had none, but she gave them our sewing machine. They locked us [the children] into one of the rooms. They were going to rape my mother. We heard her screaming. I was the oldest boy. I forced the door open and saw my mother on the floor. The soldiers told me they'd kill me. One of them hit me. I spat on him. Then they forced me to go with them into the forest.

They gave me a weapon and then taught me how to use it. In the forest, we fought against the *Interahamwe* [FDLR]. There was a lot of gunfire. Then there was a cease-fire.

We walked to Lulingu, Shabunda. For one week we walked. We didn't eat anything except *ugali* [casava-based paste]. I was so hungry, I asked a soldier about getting food, he replied: "Do you see anyone of us eating meat? Are you so hungry?" He took his knife and held my arm. He cut off the flesh from my arm. He made me grill my flesh, and then he forced me to eat it. I pretended to, but I couldn't. I spat it out when he wasn't looking.

Then there was more fighting against the *Interahamwe* in Lulingu. I got shot in the leg in a few places and lost consciousness. I woke up later in the hospital in Bukavu. They told me I had been brought there by the ICRC [International Committee of the Red Cross]. I was in the hospital for a month.

One day people I knew from church found me. They told my sisters where I was, and the next day my sisters came to find me. How they cried.

I had left my mother when she was still alive... [Emile fell silent and looked down at his hands folded in his lap. After a few moments, he continued]... That's how it is.

Variations on themes of brutality, the suffering inflicted by political violence in the Kivus has either been directly experienced or at least witnessed by all young people and is part of the texture of every day. While the details of the violence which Emile had described in his biographical narrative rarely emerged in our subsequent discussions, his experience of violence was incorporated in his physical self, his conception of the world and his way of being in it. The bullet-wounds in his leg had healed badly and continued to cause him significant pain, while the wide and smooth scar running

¹⁹ As will be discussed in Chapter 3 which details the research methodology, most of the names of the research participants have been made anonymous in this thesis due to the continuing situation of insecurity in the Kivus and the risk that the narratives offered might compromise my research participant's safety. Emile specifically requested that his real name be used in any writing which emerged from this research project.

down the length of his forearm served as a constant physical reminder of what he had lived through while serving for the RCD forces. Yet years after the political violence of the war, Emile also now struggled within the constraints of structural violence; as an orphan who had not completed secondary school and with no prospects for earning a stable livelihood, the structures of violence made everyday survival a constant challenge for him.

The interface between political and structural violence also emerged clearly in the narrative of another research participant, L-, who was 21 years old when I met him in Bunyakiri. His village had been attacked seven years before, an attack which led to the killing of many villagers including his parents and his sister. He and his older brother had fled to the town centre, where they still lived due to the continued insecurity in the area. In our discussions, L- often expressed his feelings of helplessness and frustration of having to depend on his older brother who paid his school fees and provided him with a place to live.²⁰ He wanted to start his own family, but was blocked by his lack of financial means:

I eventually want to have children, to have the means to feed them and educate them. But now my only priority is my schooling. If I have any luck, it would be to get a job. I'll probably be a teacher when I finish secondary school, though I really dream of going to university. As a teacher, maybe the government will pay me 30,000 Fc [Congolese francs, approximately US\$30] a month, plus I'll get the 25,000 Fc from the school fees that the students have to pay. But then 10% of what I might earn I'd have to give back to the church that runs the school, plus more for the school's functioning. This would never be enough money to live on, not at all. (interview, Bunyakiri, April 2010)

The structures of violence permeated and controlled so many aspects of my research participants' lives. The ways in which "inequality is structured and legitimated over time" (Farmer 2004, p. 309) was also evident in the biographical narrative of N-, another key research participant who was also the mother of a six-month old girl:

I'm the youngest child of my mother. She died soon after I was born. My father is extremely ill, he can't take care of me. After my mother died, his second wife never accepted me. Now I live in my older brother's house. I don't get along well with my sister-in-law, but I have to stay there with them. My brother is also chronically ill; he can't use his hand and can't work, but we have no means of paying for him to go to the hospital in Bukavu.

Every day we work, *c'est pénible* [it's so hard]. I go to the field with my sister-in-law, we cultivate cassava and peanuts. Every day we have to make the choice: do we eat what we've cultivated, or do we sell it? It's never enough for both and we have to choose. Each day the decision is difficult. (interview, Bunyakiri, May 2010)

During a visit to her home one afternoon, I witnessed the deep poverty in which N- and her family lived. The abject conditions were among the worst I had seen in a rural Congolese setting. In the spaces between the small huts of their parcel, several older women were preparing food for a large group of small children. N-'s sister-in-law was extremely thin, with bright red eyes and little interest in entertaining my presence. N-'s older brother, who was responsible for everyone there, seemed comparatively happier to see me. During our conversation, he expressed his great frustration with

²⁰ This narrative as well as the narrative of N- which follows have also been written up in Seymour (2012b, p. 381- 382).

the physical ailment which had debilitated his left arm and made any physical labour extremely difficult for him. He showed me a paper he had received that morning from the local chief: it was a '*convocation*' demanding that he present himself to the local authorities for having missed the previous days' communal labour effort, called '*salongo*' in Kiswahili. When he would respond to this convocation, he would inevitably have to pay a fine, as refusing to do so would only lead to even bigger problems with the local authorities. The tiny amount of money the family had been working to save for him to go to the hospital in Bukavu would instead be paid to the local administrator.

The gruelling conditions of each day did not prevent N- from imagining a very different kind of life. Among her dreams was to one day become a woman selling fish in the market, a dream that would allow her to avoid the physical exhaustion of cultivation. Working in the market would also offer her the possibility of escaping the daily insecurity which plagued her walks through the hills to the fields. N-'s daughter had been conceived in 2009 as a result of N- being raped by an unknown armed man when she had been on her way home from the fields, and N- continued to feel herself at risk of attack each day. After establishing herself as a market woman, her biggest dream would then be "to be married and to have a stable home of my own. I want to be able to take care of my daughter." Although N- was capable of imagining a better life for herself and her daughter, she remained pragmatic; she knew that having been raped and having had a child from that rape dramatically reduced her chances of being considered a desirable wife. If she ever did marry, she felt that the likely abuse she would receive from her husband would never offer her the freedom of which she sometimes allowed herself to dream.

Before leaving South Kivu in July 2010, I gave N- a small amount of money to help her start her fish trade. During a return visit to Bunyakiri the following year, she and I discussed how her life had been since we had last seen each other. She explained how her fish trade had started and had been initially successful. Within a few months, however, her brother had experienced another health crisis and this time was rushed to the hospital in Bukavu with the money which N- had provided by selling off her fish. While her brother's condition eventually stabilised, her daughter experienced multiple bouts of severe malaria and typhoid. By August 2011, N- was heavily in debt for her daughter's medical fees. Given the depth of poverty in which N- lived and the poor health of her child and brother, there was little reason to be hopeful for a better kind of life.

WHY YOUNG PEOPLE

This research has explicitly focused on 'young people' as they are the segment of the population for whom political and structural violence has been incorporated into the logic of their daily life (see Das and Kleinman 2000) for most if not all of their lives. In the national Congolese narrative, 1991 serves as the symbolic year when the state began its retreat from its citizens, when civil servants- including teachers- were no longer paid (Reno 1998, MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga 2000, Vlassenroot and Hoebeke 2006), while in the Kivus specifically, the contemporary phase of violence can be traced to the identity-based land wars of 1993 (Mamdani 2001, Pottier 2002 as described above). Different from adults who maintain a longer historical perspective, young people in the Kivus today have had their life views profoundly shaped by experiences of violence; my research therefore aimed to explore how individuals who have only known such violence experience, cope with and make sense of it. Through its examination of young people's perspectives and analyses of violence,

this research has also aimed to generate new empirical and theoretical insights on the nature of violence in North and South Kivu.

My focus 'young people' also represents an effort to move away from the prescriptive, age-based categorisations such as 'children', 'adolescents' or 'youth' which are maintained by international child protection actors. Through my previous work as a child protection professional, I had found the strict age definitions- such as a 'child' defined as anyone under the age of 18 years (United Nations 1989), an 'adolescent' as anyone between the ages of 10- 19 years (UNICEF 2011a), and a 'youth' as anyone between the ages of 15- 24 years (United Nations, n.d.)- to be arbitrary constructions that offered little in the way of understanding the unique lived experiences of the individuals concerned. Rather, the more fluid term 'young person' describes a stage of one's life cycle somewhere between childhood and adulthood (de Waal 2002, Sommers 2006). Considering locally ascribed roles, responsibilities and social status (Hart 2008, p. 286), the term 'young person' allows for a nuanced and context-specific perspective which takes into account different "cultural systems with particular sets of meanings and values" (Honwana 2012, p. 11) in the way that age-based prescriptions do not.

In the DRC, there is a general acceptance of who can be considered a young person (*'un jeune'*). A young person is someone who is not yet an adult, yet who is in the stage of transition towards adulthood. To achieve adulthood, one will have ideally completed schooling, be financially independent, own at least a small parcel of land, be married and have children. A young person thus lives in an aspirational period, with the expectation of eventually realising adulthood by finishing schooling, becoming financially independent, establishing a home and having children. This aspirational ideal is maintained in the Kivus today despite the fact that years of economic hardship and adversity associated with violent conflict have meant that its achievement has become extremely difficult for most people. For example, the inability to pay school fees has made the completion of formal schooling an untenable goal for many. Displacement and competition over land have meant that owning property may not be possible. Jobs are scarce and regular incomes extremely rare. Girls become pregnant without being married, and as often is the case with militarised sexual violence, without knowing the father of her child. So although the ideal remains, the structures of violence have deeply altered what might be considered as the characteristics of a young person in the Kivus today.

When seeking participants for this research I did not put a lower or upper age limit on who I would like to participate, leaving the locally understood conception of *'jeune'* to determine who would come forward. As will be detailed in Chapter 3, my research collaborators helped me in identifying potential participants, and through a process of self-selection among the individuals who expressed an interest in participating, the age range of participants at the beginning of the data collection period was between 12- 24 years old. Within this span of years, there was clearly a difference between the younger and the older participants. The younger participants- those more or less between the ages of 12- 16 years- were different from the older participants in ways that went beyond physical, cognitive or emotional development. Most notably, the younger participants for the most part retained their aspirations towards the idealised model of adulthood- they still hoped to finish school and to eventually find a job, while marriage still seemed achievable to them.

In contrast, the older participants (more or less those between the ages of 19 and 24 years) were largely disillusioned and had lost much of their hope in achieving the adult ideal. They had already

abandoned school as they were unable to pay the associated fees and were unemployed or living through daily wage labour. Others had parents who had died or migrated, leaving them responsible for the care of their younger siblings. According to many of the older participants, there were few prospects for marriage: the young men could not envision how they would be able to secure the means to pay a bride price or establish their own home,²¹ while the young women who already had their own children, either as a consequence of rape or transactional sex, had little hope of meeting a man who would be willing to marry them. As my research participants explained, the experience of violence has had a profound impact on their lives; they are frustrated, and their sense of defeat permeates their conceptions of the present and of the future. In a discussion about hopes and aspirations for the future, a 20-year-old man who had lived in the streets of Goma since the age of seven stated: “Why should I have thoughts about my future? I’m already dead” (focus group discussion conducted on behalf of War Child UK, Goma, July 2010²²).

As will be detailed in the Chapter 3 which describes the research methodology, the findings and analysis emerging in this thesis are based on data collected from more than 300 young people, as well as a selection of adult informants. As the research enquiry specifically targeted young people, the findings and analysis are specific to them, so a definitive claim about the applicability of the findings to the Kivu population would require a new phase of research which more systematically involves adults. However, some of the findings and analyses included in this thesis may also have wider relevance. For example, *la débrouille* – or ‘finding one’s way, as will be introduced in Chapter 2 and examined in detail in Chapter 4- is a coping mechanism used by virtually all Congolese in their efforts to navigate the informalised political economy (MacGaffey 1986, Marriage 2013) and ensure their survival each day. Similarly, as will be seen in Chapter 5, deference to a patron with the aim of gaining access to material or social support is a tactic also commonly deployed by adults. The importance of victim-perpetrator discourses in meaning attribution processes- as will be elaborated in Chapter 6- is also relevant for adults. What seemed to be specific to young people is the lack of hope and deep sense of defeat; unlike adults who could recall a time before 1991 when state services functioned, or before 1993 when violent conflict was not the normal state of affairs, young people only have violence as their frame of reference and thus seem totally submitted to it. As expressed by Emile in his narrative above- as well as by so many other of my young research participants- “that’s how it is” demonstrates a worldview among young people in which violence is an inevitable part of reality.

OVERVIEW OF THE THESIS

The thesis examines the relationship between violence and young people’s processes of coping with it. The chapters are organised in a way that builds up the story of violence and coping from an individual to an international level. Continuing the theoretical analysis begun in this chapter, Chapter 2 next reviews the psychological literature on experiences of war, in particular the theories of trauma and resilience; examining in greater depth resilience theory, highlighting the theory’s main

²¹ Of the more than 300 young participants in this research, only one of them (R-, whose narrative features in Chapter 4) was married, owned his own property and was successfully supporting his family; having already achieved much of the adult ideal, at 19 years old he nevertheless still considered himself to be a young person.

²² Also quoted in War Child UK (2010, p. 30), a report which I wrote on behalf of War Child UK entitled “Strengthening Community-based Child Protection Mechanisms in Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo” based on research I conducted in Goma, North Kivu, June-July 2010.

weaknesses. The chapter then presents an elaborated framework for studying processes of coping with violence; based on some of the perspectives offered by resilience theory, the elaborated framework draws on the literatures of anthropology, sociology, history and politics. The established framework considers young people's coping processes in terms of individual responses, social support and meaning-attribution processes; these theoretical components provide the organising structure for chapters 4- 6 of the thesis in which the empirical data on coping is presented. Chapter 3 describes in detail the methodology used for this research, including the preparation for fieldwork, the tools and methods used in data collection and the process of data analysis. Chapter 4 examines in-depth the individual ways of coping with violence, demonstrating how young people take advantage of the limited opportunities available to them in a context of deep poverty and uncertainty, and considers how effective short-term coping tactics can lead to the weakening of young people's coping capacities in the long term. Chapter 5 considers young people's coping processes as situated within their social environments; through an examination of the role of patronage relationships, the chapter considers how this particular expression of social support remains an essential aspect of young people's coping mechanisms even as it strengthens weakness, dependence and inequality. Processes of meaning attribution are considered in Chapter 6, as linkages are made between the psychologically protective function of identity-based, victim-perpetrator discourses and their role in contributing to the conservation of violence. Chapter 7 examines how international child protection interventions which are designed to help young people cope more effectively with the consequences of violence can instead reinforce young people's vulnerability and weakness; the chapter also considers how such interventions can lead to strengthening the structures of violence in the DRC.

CHAPTER 2: AN ELABORATED THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE STUDY OF YOUNG PEOPLE'S MEANS OF COPING WITH VIOLENCE

This chapter sets out an elaborated framework for exploring the ways in which young people in North and South Kivu experience and cope with the structures of violence. It begins with a review of the psychological literature on the impacts of violence, noting the limitations of the trauma perspective and introducing the concept of resilience. A further examination of the resilience literature studying young people's ways of coping with violence leads to an identification of the key limitations of resilience theory. The chapter then elaborates an interdisciplinary framework for considering young people's coping processes, drawing primarily on anthropological and sociological theory. This elaborated framework considers coping processes from the perspectives of individual coping and agency, social support and processes of meaning attribution. Each of these perspectives will be examined in detail in chapters 4- 6 of the thesis.

PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH ON THE IMPACTS OF VIOLENCE: TRAUMA VS. RESILIENCE

Since as early as World War II, the discipline of psychology has studied children's capacity to cope with the destruction and loss associated with war (Freud and Burlingham 1943). Much of the literature has focused on the devastating and traumatic experiences of war, a perspective which has had an important influence on public policies relating to children living in contexts of violent conflict. Contrasting the trauma model is that of resilience, which considers how individuals experience better-than-expected developmental outcomes despite the experience of risk and adversity. This section now compares the trauma and resilience models in relation to young people's experiences of violent conflict.

TRAUMA AND PSYCHOPATHOLOGY

The dominant psychological approach to studying the impacts of war and violence on children has been based on the assumption that such experiences are necessarily traumatising. Trauma is defined in psychology as "an emotionally painful and harmful event" (Oxford Concise Medical Dictionary 2002). Trauma studies gained prominence in Western psychology in the 1980s following the official categorisation of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) by the American Psychiatric Association. While this particular diagnosis initially applied only to American veterans of the Vietnam War, PTSD soon came to be considered as "the major psychological consequence of war events" (Neuner et al. 2004, p. 6). Becoming the primary measure for gauging the impact of war on mental health, the PTSD diagnostic is now generally associated with any "traumatic event that entailed at least the perception of life threatening danger beyond one's control" (Miller and Rasmussen 2010, p. 10).²³

Clinically, PTSD is defined as:

an anxiety disorder caused by the major personal stress of a serious or frightening event, such as an injury, assault, rape, or exposure to warfare or a disaster involving many

²³ Fassin and Rechtman (2009, p. 21) problematize the application of the trauma diagnosis from an anthropological perspective: "By applying the same psychological classification to the person who suffers violence, the person who commits it, and the person who witnesses it, the concept of trauma profoundly transforms the moral framework of what constitutes humanity."

casualties. The reaction may be immediate or delayed for months. The sufferer experiences the persistent recurrence of images or memories of the event, together with nightmares, insomnia, a sense of isolation, guilt, irritability, and loss of concentration. Emotions may be deadened or depression may develop... (Oxford Concise Medical Dictionary 2002).

The criteria for a PTSD diagnosis include: a stressor that would evoke significant symptoms of distress in almost everyone; re-experiencing trauma through memories, dreams or flashbacks; withdrawal from the external world, disinterest and detachment; hyper-alertness and sleep disturbance; guilt about surviving; memory impairment or trouble concentrating; and avoidance of activities that arouse recollection or resemble the traumatic event (American Psychiatric Association 2000).

Having emerged as a specific diagnosis related to American soldiers who had lived through a particular experience of military engagement in Vietnam, the PTSD model nevertheless appealed to a range of researchers studying the psychological impacts of war. By the 1990s, research into the impact of violent conflict on children began to draw heavily on this trauma perspective. Psychologists studying contexts of protracted violence such as Palestine and Israel or Northern Ireland hypothesised that extended exposure to conflict would lead to significantly negative impacts on children (Garbarino, Kostelny and Dubrow 1991). According to theorists, "repeated and chronic stresses may lead to anger, despair, and severe psychic numbing... Permanent developmental damage is more likely to occur when multiple risks are present in a child's environment and when stressful settings endure as a feature of the child's life" (Garbarino and Kostelny 1996, p. 33- 34). These studies assumed that children exposed to "political violence are more likely to develop a variety of difficulties, including mental health disorders, behavior problems, sleep disturbances, somatic complaints, and altered levels of cognitive functioning and moral reasoning" (Ladd and Cairns 1996, p. 14). Children were presumed to experience trauma if they had been "a victim of violent acts, such as being kidnapped, arrested, or tortured", had lost someone close to them or witnessed acts of violence (Macksoud and Aber 1996, p. 84). It was assumed that they would be similarly traumatised if they had witnessed or experienced "injury by a weapon or gun, beatings/torture, harassment by armed personnel, robbery/extortion, imprisonment, poisoning, rape or sexual abuse, beatings, abduction, child marriage, forced prostitution/sexual slavery, forced circumcision..." (Neuner et al. 2004, p. 3).

This comprehensive and encompassing application of trauma began to receive critical examination in the late 1990s. Critiques of the trauma model focused particularly on its inappropriate application in non-Western contexts as well as its tendency to pathologise people's experience of war:

There is no empirical basis for reductionist medicalisation that assigns a sick role on such a large scale and indiscriminate basis. The reframing of the understandable distress and suffering of war as a pathological disorder is a serious distortion and does not serve the interests of the vast majority of survivors, for whom post-traumatic stress is more metaphor than meaningful entity. Most wars are in non-western settings, and the globalisation of western psychological concepts and practices risks perpetuating the colonial status of the non-western mind. Every culture has its own frameworks for mental health, and norms for help-seeking at times of crisis... (Summerfield 1997, p. 1568)

Despite the critique of applying trauma-focussed approaches to studies of children's war experience (Summerfield 2001), assumptions of PTSD continue to dominate psychological research on children and war (Jordans et al. 2009). Diverse perspectives are emerging, however, as more recent research in Sri Lanka (Fernando et al. 2010), the West Bank (al-Krenawi, Lev-Wiesel and Sehwal 2007) and Chad (Rasmussen et al. 2010) has shown that the correlation between war experience and the expression of PTSD symptoms is actually much less significant than what previous research had shown. According to one review, war exposure was shown to account for less than 25% of the variance in PTSD symptoms, calling into question "the widespread assumption that the degree of war exposure is the critical determinant of mental health severity in conflict and post-conflict societies" (Miller and Rasmussen 2010, p. 10).

Indeed, similar to studies which have been conducted in other contexts (Bonanno and Mancini 2008), young people in the Kivus appear to be much more able to cope effectively with their situation than psychological theory presumes. As I had learnt before embarking on this research project, and as was confirmed through my fieldwork, the trauma model is neither relevant nor helpful in understanding how most young Congolese experience and cope with the political and structural violences affecting their daily lives.²⁴ This thesis also adopts a critical perspective on the use of the trauma model, particularly in a context such as the Kivus where the structures of violence are so deeply founded and so constraining as to affect the vast majority of the population. Young people in the Kivus have lived all or most of their lives in conditions of violent conflict and, like most people, have experienced profound loss, destruction, fear and uncertainty. Yet, while having lived through the extremes of war-related violence, most of the young people I knew did not outwardly express the trauma symptoms as defined by Western psychological theory. Rather than expressing "severe psychic numbing" (Garbarino and Kostelny 1996, p. 33, as cited above) or "altered levels of cognitive functioning and moral reasoning" (Ladd and Cairns 1996, p. 14, as cited above), the majority of young people who I met seemed to be coping rather effectively with the extreme adversities associated with violence.

RESILIENCE THEORY

This apparent capacity for young people to cope effectively with violence led me to the psychological concept of resilience. Resilience theory examines psychological responses to risk conditions not from the perspective of weakness which is assumed by the trauma model, but rather from a perspective of strength. It considers the qualities, factors and conditions which protect individuals from the development of psychopathology. As my previous work with young people in other war-affected contexts had demonstrated, the majority of young people do seem able to cope quite effectively

²⁴ It is worth noting that there is one strand of psychological research which examines the daily stresses prevalent in war environments. Building on earlier psychological investigations into the impacts of 'little hassles' (Ruffin 1993), studies on daily stressors in contexts affected by war acknowledge that armed conflicts do have a clear psychological effect, yet that the associated "highly stressful conditions or daily stressors, such as poverty, social marginalization, isolation, inadequate housing, and changes in family structure and functioning" (Miller and Rasmussen 2010, p. 8) are equally important to consider. In conflict environments, the impacts of the systematic conditions of poverty and poor access to social support networks are considered to have as much of a damaging effect on the psychological health of individuals as direct exposure to violence. For example, recent research in Afghanistan (Miller et al. 2009, Fernando et al. 2010) shows that daily stressors may have an even more powerful impact on mental health outcomes than do direct war experiences, findings which further call into question the limitations of the trauma model. These studies demonstrate how the difficulties associated with gaining access to basic social services, chronic poverty and unemployment can lead to greater psychological and psychosocial distress than exposure to overt political violence.

with the risks and adversities associated with violent conflict. Resilience theory therefore offered a point of departure for my research project in order to begin an in-depth examination of young people's experiences of violence and processes of coping with it.

The term 'resilience' is borrowed from the field of epidemiology, where it is defined as "the factors that accentuate or inhibit disease and deficiency states, and the processes that underlie them" (Haggerty et al. 1994, p. 9). Psychologists adopting resilience as an analytical framework have elaborated a wide range of definitions to explain it, from a dynamic process of adjustment that leads to a "relatively good outcome despite suffering risk experiences" that would otherwise lead to psychopathology (Rutter 2007, p. 205) to a more general explanation of "better than expected development outcomes" (Ungar 2008, p. 220). Resilience includes a "class of phenomena characterized by good outcomes in spite of serious threats to adaptation or development" (Masten 2001, p. 228), as well as the "qualities that enable one to thrive in the face of adversity" (Zrally 2008, p. 82). From a social perspective, resilience includes the "negotiations between individuals and their environments for the resources to define themselves as healthy amidst conditions collectively viewed as adverse" (Ungar 2004, p. 342). Other definitions focus on positive psychological adaptations and the capacity to function effectively despite conditions of adversity (Masten and Powell 2003, Kostelny 2006, Slone and Shoshani 2008).

Synthesising the definitions listed above, resilience as defined in this thesis is the capacity to experience a relatively positive developmental outcome despite the conditions of risk and adversity. To be classified as 'resilient' one needs to express a capacity for positive adaptation, manifesting the ability to 'thrive' and do well in such conditions. Although this definition does not effectively respond to the critique that resilience theory lacks a clear, precise and objective definition which adequately explains how it functions (Boyden and Cooper 2007), resilience theory nevertheless serves as a useful explanatory concept from which to begin exploring how young people manage to cope with adverse conditions.

The capacity of children to cope with persistent risk and adversity has received attention in psychology since the 1960s, when researchers aimed to establish links between stressful life events experienced by children and the consequent development of mental or physical illness (Haggerty et al. 1994). Contrary to common assumptions, results showed that many more children than expected managed to cope effectively with stressful situations. That the majority of children whose parents were, for example, mentally ill or alcoholic did not develop some degree of psychopathology led researchers to classify these children as 'invulnerable' to hardship (Anthony and Koupernick 1974). Notions of invulnerability were eventually discarded as further studies showed that children were indeed vulnerable to risk, but that their responses differed significantly depending on variations in individual, relational and environmental factors. For example, key protective factors were found to include an individual's personal temperament, the existence of supportive social relations and the availability of community resources (Bonanno and Mancini 2008).

Early resilience studies were mainly focused on the situation of children growing up at the margins of Western European or American society, where the risks they faced were exceptional when compared to the majority of the population. For example, research was conducted on the effects of poverty and other social and economic risks on children (Elder 1974, Werner and Smith 1992), as well as on the impacts of parental psychological disorders (Luthar et al. 2003), drug addictions

(Barnard 2003) and alcohol dependence (Werner and Johnson 1999). Studies with 'high-risk' children- or those who experience multiple risks such as chronic poverty, parents with little formal education, and disorganised family environments- found that often the experience of multiple risks could lead to 'steeling' effects which strengthened a child's capacity to cope with adversity (Rutter 2007). Although children's capacity for resilience clearly relates to and impacts upon previous and subsequent experiences of risk, the assumption that these experiences necessarily lead to poor psychological or developmental outcomes has been consistently challenged by resilience research (Masten et al. 1990, Richters and Martinez 1993) as only a small minority of children who experience multiple family and environmental risks ever develop any form of psychopathology (Garmezy 1985, Rutter 2007).

By the mid-1990s, psychologists increasingly applied a resilience framework to studying the impact of protracted violent conflict on children. Results from studies in Palestine and Israel (Punamaki 1996, Garbarino and Kostenly 1996), Northern Ireland (Killian 2002, Muldoon 2004) and South Africa (Dawes 1990) showed that children were not only *not* traumatised by their experiences of conflict, but were generally able to adapt to and cope quite well with the daily risks and adversities of political violence. According to these studies, only a small minority of children growing up during war ever expressed any form of mental pathology (Killian 2002) or long-term emotional reactions (Dawes and Donald 1994). Rather than being an extraordinary capacity, researchers therefore began to consider resilience as a common and "fundamental feature of normal coping skills" (Bonanno and Mancini 2008, p. 371), a capacity which "arises from the normative functions of human adaptational systems" (Masten 2001, p. 227).

While resilience theory offers a useful perspective for considering young people's capacities for coping with violence, my review of the resilience literature also revealed significant gaps in the theory, four of which this research project attempts to address. First is its contextual limitation: although numerous resilience studies have been conducted in diverse contexts, they nevertheless rely on and apply Western psychological assumptions. The problems associated with applying such assumptions to non-Western settings have long been articulated (Devereux 1980), and are especially relevant when considering the resilience definitions of 'good' outcomes, 'positive' adaptations and 'effective' functioning, determinations of which are necessarily context-dependent (Masten and Obradovic 2006). As argued by Boyden and Cooper (2007, p. 6- 7), "positive adaptation is difficult to claim as universally and objectively knowable". Similarly, Aisenberg and Herrenkohl (2008, p. 308) critique the fact that resilience is defined by outsiders and not by those who are living in the conditions of violence and adversity themselves:

the construct of resilience, as currently defined, involves a subjective judgment of what constitutes an individual's "success" or ability to overcome the odds. This judgment is largely made by persons who are outsiders to the high-risk context in which purported resilient individuals reside.

Some resilience researchers have managed to move away from the Western approach (Ungar 2004, Schoon 2006, Zrally 2008). For example, in her study of women survivors of rape during the Rwandan genocide, Zrally (2008, p. 263) explores local definitions of resilience, which according to Rwandan women, include the capacities to 'continue living', to 'withstand', to 'live again', to 'get used to', to 'ignore', and to 'fight for survival'. Yet while these qualities may represent degrees of positive

adaptation, the capacity for ‘thriving’ and doing well which are required by resilience theory are less evident.

A second limitation of resilience theory is its lack of capacity to sufficiently account for the social, political, economic, historical and cultural structures in which individual coping processes take place. Certainly resilience theory goes much further than other psychological theories in considering the social and community environment in which individuals live; for example, resilience theorists do emphasise that individual coping processes are highly influenced by family (Rutter and Madge 1976, Bandura 1977, Garmezy 1985, Rutter 1994) and community dynamics (Garmezy 1985, Dawes 1990). However, as this thesis demonstrates, much deeper contextual analysis is required to gain a sufficiently nuanced understanding of young people’s coping mechanisms. Without analysing the structural context within which individuals are embedded, the political or economic factors which lay the foundations for the conditions of risk and adversity will not be sufficiently accounted for even though they are essential elements of people’s coping processes. It is this limitation which has led to the inclusion of sociology, anthropology, political economy, history and politics in this research framework.

The third limitation of resilience theory is its assumption that risk and adversity are abnormal occurrences which deviate from general conditions. As seen in the overview of resilience literature above, many resilience studies consider the experiences of risk and adversity to be exceptional, as aberrations from a societal situation where risk and adversity are not normally experienced. For example, resilience research may consider how children can cope effectively with mental illness among their parents, or how minority youth in inner cities are able to deal with community violence; in these cases, experiences of adversity are considered to be marginal when compared to the experiences of the larger society. Yet in the DRC, the experiences of risk and adversity are chronic and pervasive and are central aspects of most people’s lives. When violence is the norm, the ‘relativity’ of a positive developmental outcome is less clear as most people are dealing with similar conditions of risk and adversity. This theoretical limitation has led to the shift in research focus away from designations of individual resilience towards a deeper exploration of young people’s coping processes in conditions when most people are similarly affected by violence.

The final limitation of resilience theory treated here is its methodological approach. Most resilience studies rely almost exclusively on quantitative methods; but efforts to quantitatively measure the highly complex and subjective human processes of coping can end up offering very little insight. For example, the reliance on surveys and questionnaires in resilience studies places numerical values on experiences of adversity, thus silencing the voices and perspectives of those who are the subject of study. This limitation will be discussed in greater detail in the methodology chapter below, and has motivated this research project’s use of emically-guided qualitative methods.

AN ELABORATED FRAMEWORK FOR STUDYING YOUNG PEOPLE’S MEANS OF COPING WITH VIOLENCE

These imitations render resilience theory inadequate for understanding young people’s coping processes in a context such as the Kivus. This thesis therefore proposes an elaborated interdisciplinary framework which allows for a deeper investigation of the complex nature of

political and structural violence as experienced by young people in the Kivus. In the elaboration of this framework, three aspects of resilience theory are retained: the individual nature of coping, the role of social support, and the protective function played by meaning attribution. These three aspects are complemented by related concepts in the fields of sociology, anthropology and politics, including individual capacities for agency among youth (Boyden 2000, Utas 2005, Vigh 2006a, Hart 2008), social support systems and patronage (Reno 1998, Chabal 2009), and the politics of meanings and interpretations of violence (Riches 1986, Malkki 1995, Finnstrom 2005). This interdisciplinary theoretical framework is outlined here, then elaborated upon in chapters 4- 6 with empirical data from the Kivus.

INDIVIDUAL COPING

According to resilience theory, young people's capacity to cope with adversity is strengthened when they have the ability to plan and take life decisions (Rutter and Quinton 1984) and to maintain a sense of autonomy (Garmezy 1985). Resilience has been shown to be strongest among children who feel like they have control over their environment (Werner and Smith 1992), while a positive conception of the self and high self-esteem are also shown to enhance young people's coping capacities (Rutter 2000). These capacities relate to the notion of personal agency, which is defined in psychology as the human capacity to "act mindfully to make desired things happen rather than simply undergo happenings" (Bandura 2001, p. 5).

In contexts of adversity, agency is considered to be an essential aspect of an individual's coping processes:

unless people believe they can produce desired results and forestall detrimental ones by their actions, they have little incentive to act or to persevere in the face of difficulties. Whatever other factors may operate as guides and motivators, they are rooted in the core belief that one has the power to produce effects by one's actions. (Bandura 2001, p. 10)

The notion of agency is treated the field of childhood studies to reflect the ways in which young people are able to play an active role in their own circumstances, constructing and determining their own life outcomes (James and Prout 1997). Such a perspective is positive and aims to be empowering, affirming young people's capacities to influence their own fate (Boyden and de Berry 2004). While this perspective challenges "earlier assumptions about the inherent passivity of children" (Hart 2008, p. 279), serving as a counter-discourse to narratives of young people's helplessness and vulnerability (see Tefferi 2007, Boyden 2008), it does not sufficiently take into account the structures and conditions in which young people live.

The relationship between social structures and agency is treated in the sociological and anthropological literatures, where agency is defined as the capacity one has to act within and influence established social structures and relations (Bourdieu 1977). With a perspective on these structures, de Certeau (1984) examines the ways in which individuals living within an established order rely on tactics to "use, manipulate and divert" (ibid., p. 30) the spaces that have been determined for them. The ability to "find *ways of using* the constraining order" (ibid., p. 30) represents a limited expression of agency among individuals who are unable to change the

structures in which they live, but who are at times able to seize possible opportunities and to re-appropriate certain aspects of the system which are useful to them.

This structural perspective on agency is especially relevant when studying contexts of violence, where living conditions are highly adverse and uncertain (Vigh 2006a, Hart 2008). Anthropological research on young people's experiences of violence and conflict (Richards 1996, Utas 2003, Vigh 2006a, Hart 2008, Boyden 2008) explore youth experiences at the "intersection between agency and social forces" (Christiansen et al. 2006, p. 16), examining how young people adjust to and take advantage of the new and changing circumstances presented by war (Arnfred and Utas 2007). For example, in Sierra Leone Richards (1996) shows how young people enact their personal agency to benefit from the disorder of violent conflict, thus remaking the social order which otherwise proscribed life trajectories available to them. In the context of Guinea Bissau, Vigh (2006b, p. 31) explores the "tactical ways in which youth struggle to expand the horizons of possibility in a world of conflict", demonstrating how agency among young people in a post-war setting interacts with prevailing social and environmental forces.

In their ethnographic studies of young people's agency in Mozambique and Liberia respectively, Honwana (2001) and Utas (2005) elaborate the concept of tactical agency to explain how young people manage to survive and make the most out of their situations otherwise conscribed by violent conflict. They show how the exercise of tactical agency depends not only on individual capacities, but also the social environment and the political structures in which they live. As explained by Utas (2005, p. 407):

the idea of *tactic agency* is that of short-term responses in relationship to a society's social structure. Tactic agency forms part of the trajectories travelled by the weak. In opposition to this, there is *strategic agency*—an agency for those who can forecast future states of affairs and have the possibility to make use of other people's tactical agency. If we follow this argument, agency is no longer something you possess or do not. Rather, it is something you maintain in relation to a social field inhabited with other social actors. Agency is thus highly dependent on specific social situations.

These sociological and ethnographic accounts of agency are conscious of the structures in which young people are embedded. Such consciousness is necessary in any analysis of young people's experiences of violence the context of the Kivus, where the structures of violence are so deeply entrenched and such a powerful force in defining the details of young people's everyday.

Coping is defined as the capacity to "deal effectively with something difficult" (Oxford Dictionaries, n.d.)²⁵; in the Kivus, coping consists of tactics which offer young people the best short-term options, but which do little to influence the structures of violence in which they are embedded. At best, the coping mechanisms relied upon by young people in the Kivus represent an extremely limited form of agency, although more often their coping mechanisms merely provide them with the means to survive the violence of each day. The dominant coping mechanisms adopted among young people in the Kivus are classified in this thesis as: '*la débrouille*', submission and victimhood. As will be seen,

²⁵ Interestingly, the etymology of 'to cope' is linked to violence, coming from the Greek word "*kolaphos*", or a "blow with the fist" (See Oxford Dictionaries, <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/cope> .)

each of these mechanisms are used at different times and in different ways by young people, demonstrating the complexity of coping processes at the individual, social and political levels.

The first coping mechanism examined in depth by this thesis is *la débrouille*, which most approximates the notion of agency, although in a form highly conscribed by the Kivu's structures of violence. *La débrouille* is a ubiquitous concept throughout the DRC, and indeed throughout much of Francophone sub-Saharan Africa (Olivier de Sardan 1996). The word is derived from the French verb *se débrouiller*, which can be translated as "to find a way", "to make arrangements", "to use one's own means" or "to be satisfied with".²⁶ *La débrouille* is a specific way of coping which has come to dominate discourses on survival in the DRC (MacGaffey 1986), a term which also serves as an epithet to justify the absence of government services and the prevalence of corrupt practices (Eriksson Baaz and Stern 2010).²⁷ At the individual level, *la débrouille* serves as a key coping mechanism which is primarily associated with finding a way to meet one's material needs. Given the lack of employment alternatives and difficulties in finding a way to earn a living, the capacity for *la débrouille* allows young people to survive and to make the best of challenging circumstances. However, it does not allow them to significantly influence or act upon the structures of violence in which they are embedded.

The second dominant coping mechanism used by young people in the Kivus to survive within the structures of violence is submission, a mechanism which cannot be considered as even a limited expression of individual agency. As demonstrated by my research participants, submission is an essential mechanism for coping with violence that can often be a life-saving response when conditions of uncertainty and insecurity prevail. Unable to influence the structures of violence in which they are entrenched, young people often rationalise their experiences of profound suffering as: "that's just how it is" (multiple interviews and discussions, North and South Kivu, 2010- 2011). Discourses of submission demonstrate how people "subject or sublimate themselves in order to adapt to their structures" (Bourdieu 2000, p. 165). At the same time, they show how "the dominated, often unwittingly, contribute to their own domination by tacitly accepting, in advance, the limits imposed on them" (ibid., p. 169). As will be discussed in chapters 4 and 6, my research participants have learnt first-hand that resistance does not make a difference in their lives, and that submitting to the structures of violence often presents the only safe alternative available to them. Affirming what resilience theorists call a cognitive capacity for appraisal of events (Lazarus and Launier 1978), submission is an obvious and rational mechanism of self-protection for young people.

The third dominant coping mechanism adopted by young people in the Kivus is victimhood. A highly complex and inter-subjective mechanism, victimhood requires an individual and an audience and relies on the self-perception and self-portrayals of weakness and vulnerability. In the thesis, victimhood as a tactic of the weak is considered in three variations: Chapter 5 examines the way in which young people use their positions of weakness and dependence to gain access to patronage

²⁶ According to the Larousse Online Dictionary (n.d.), the French definitions of «*se débrouiller*» include : «*trouver un moyen quelconque... s'arranger pour... Se tirer d'affaire par ses propres moyens... Se contenter de quelque chose... s'en satisfaire*». According to the Oxford Dictionaries (n.d.), "to cope" is translated into the French as *se débrouiller*.

²⁷ According to Eriksson Baaz and Stern (2010, p. 35): "the meaning of *la débrouillardise* comes from the legitimating of the illegal practice of artisan diamond digging after the secession of South Kasai in the 1960s. Since the state lacked a budget, its leader, Albert Kalondji, decreed "*débrouillez-vous*" to be Article 15 of the constitution of the territory of the Luba-Kasai... thus liberalizing the diamond industry... This simple "*débrouillez-vous*" order was subsequently given to the whole nation by President Mobutu, and has since become associated with all illegal activities: corruption, theft, smuggling, embezzlement..."

support. Chapter 6 considers the role victimhood as manifest in victim-perpetrator discourses within young people's processes of meaning attribution. Finally, victimhood is examined in Chapter 7 through its expression of what Utas (2005) has termed 'victimcy', explained as "a form of self-representation by which a certain form of tactic agency is effectively exercised under the trying, uncertain, and disempowering circumstances that confront actors in warscapes" (ibid., p. 403), usually in order to gain access to assistance and services. As the empirical evidence will show, the consistent reliance on weakness and victimhood by young people creates a feedback effect within the structures of violence which contributes to further weakness and dependence.

The mechanisms which young people rely on to deal with the structures of violence provide evidence of what Bonanno and Mancini (2008, p. 372) have elsewhere explained: "coping does not necessarily need to be a thing of beauty; it just needs to get the job done". This conception of coping is a long way from the idea of positive adaptation and the capacity to 'thrive' which is central to resilience theory. Similarly, as the discussion above highlights, the coping mechanisms adopted by young people in the Kivus are not expressions of agency they are used mostly to survive the structures of violence rather than to influence them. As will be examined in depth in the following chapters, young people are relying on whatever opportunities might be available to them "to expand the horizons of possibility" (Vigh 2006b, p. 31) even as these horizons offer little which could allow them to challenge and change the structures of violence which prevail in the DRC. Through their reliance on these individual coping mechanisms, the best that young people can usually hope for are short-term gains, without much prospect for long-term advancement.

SOCIAL SUPPORT

Social support is a fundamental component of young people's coping processes and the second level of analysis within the coping framework elaborated in this thesis. The protective role of social support has been examined in multiple disciplines, showing how the social environment can support or weaken individual capacities for adaptation to risk and adversity. In contexts affected by violence, the generally positive function of social support has been confirmed in the psychology (Kostelny 2006), economic development (Colletta and Cullen 2000) and public health (Kana'iaupuni et al. 2005) literatures.

Healthy family functioning has been shown to help children to cope effectively with conditions of adversity (Garbarino, Kostelny and Dubrow 1991). Resilience studies in the United States place particular attention on the role of family and social support, demonstrating how family and social networks lay the foundation from which children are able to explore and test the world around them (Rutter and Madge 1976). Studies which have been conducted on the mediation of violence by families and communities among American minority populations have shown that "a child's adaptation and positive development following violence exposure depends on the social surroundings and environmental influences on the child and his or her family" (Aisenberg and Herrenkohl 2008, p. 304). These studies provide evidence on the linkages between community violence and increased violent behaviour among young people (Halliday-Boykins and Graham 2001, Buka et al. 2001) and have emphasised that in such contexts, the protective role of parents (Buka et al. 2001), the existence of stable and safe home environments (Richters and Martinez 1993), and the

degree of community cohesion (Gorman-Smith and Tolan 2003) all play a central role in children's capacities for coping effectively with the negative psychological impacts of community violence.

Research in situations of violent political conflict has confirmed the fundamental role of family support in protecting individuals from the harmful psychological impacts of violence. Psychological studies conducted among children during World War II demonstrated how family support and social attachment are essential for mitigating the impacts of displacement and separation from parents, with the negative effects of war on children only becoming "significant the moment it breaks up family life and uproots the first emotional attachments of the child within the family group" (Freud and Burlingham 1943, p. 149). In more recent studies, children have been found to be better able to cope with the impacts of political violence in a "context of healthy family functioning and parental well-being" (Garbarino and Kostelny 1996, p. 43) and supportive family environments (Qouta et al. 2008, Macksoud and Aber 1996, Betancourt and Williams 2008). Studies conducted among youth living in conflict-affected environments such as Palestine show that family and social support is a key element of resilience (Qouta, Punamäki and El Sarraj 2008), and that chronic political violence may represent "a manageable threat when children face that danger in the context of healthy family functioning and parental well-being" (Garbarino and Kostelny 1996, p. 43).

Parents do not always provide the required protection for their children's well-being however (Elder 1974, Masten et al. 1990, Werner and Smith 1992), sometimes presenting risks to their healthy psychological development (Garmezy 1985, Rutter 1994). Disturbed parent-child relationships can contribute to the development of psychopathology among children (Rutter 1999), while alcoholism and mental illness in parents have also been shown to weaken young people's capacities to cope (Elder 1974, Masten et al. 1990, Werner and Smith 1992). Studies among young single mothers in the United States have demonstrated how members of the extended family can raise stress levels among mothers (Cramer and McDonald 1996), while in Mexico, stressors associated with relying on kin networks in conditions of economic adversity have been shown to negatively impact children's health outcomes (Kana'iaupuni et al. 2005). According to Luthar (2006, p. 780): "serious disruptions in the early relationships with caregivers – in the form of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse – strongly impair the chances of resilient adaptation later in life. Whereas some maltreated children will obviously do better in life than others, the likelihood of sustained competence, without corrective, ameliorative relationship experiences, remains compromised at best."

Beyond the family, social networks are essential for supporting effective psychological adaptation, providing individuals with a sense of their place in the world (Garmezy 1985). Effective coping consists of interactions between an individual and their context (Gilligan 2001, Masten and Obradovic 2006), demonstrating that the capacity to effectively cope is "not a condition of individuals alone, but also exists as a trait of a child's social and political setting" (Ungar 2008, p. 220). From this perspective, capacities for effective coping are learnt through social experiences, as "children are exposed to discourses of coping which are regarded by the society or community as appropriate for their gender and age, and which then become part of their social understanding" (Dawes and Donald 1994, p. 190). Coping thus becomes part of a social process whereby "individuals will largely organise what they feel, say, do, and expect to fit prevailing expectations and categories" (Summerfield 2001, p. 96). These social understandings allow individuals to make sense of their experience of adversity and to adapt appropriately.

The social ecology model of child development as elaborated by Bronfenbrenner (1986, see also Boothby et al. 2006) emphasises the foundational role of social relationships in children's development processes. As summarised by Lynch and Cicchetti (1998, p. 236), Bronfenbrenner's ecological model is constituted by three interacting systems:

The *macrosystem* includes cultural beliefs and values that permeate societal and family functioning. The *exosystem* consists of the neighborhood and community settings in which families and children live. The *microsystem* incorporates the family environment that children and adults create and experience.

The social ecology perspective shows how relations within families, among peers and with local institutions and authorities are central elements protecting young people from the developmental risks associated with conditions of adversity (Ager et al. 2005). Resilience theory also integrates this perspective, asserting that "the interaction between individuals and their social ecologies will determine the degree of positive outcomes experienced" (Ungar 2008, p. 220).

Social support has been found to be especially important in dealing with disasters (Bonanno et al. 2007, Boothby et al. 2006), while the capacity of people "to rebuild social networks and a sense of community" (Summerfield 1997, p. 1568) is considered to be a critical factor in determining how well individuals cope with adverse situations. In contexts of violent conflict, social support is expected "to mute the experience of stress, enhance well-being, reduce the severity of illness, and speed recovery from both mental and physical disorders" (Slone and Shoshani 2008, p. 350 cited Seeman 1996). In research among Rwandan genocide-rape survivors, Zraly (2008) considers the way in which resilience is strengthened socially through a 'political economy of emotions' framework, showing "how deep social structures impact the emotional experience and expression of individuals and groups as mediated by culture and context" (ibid., p. 393). Similar findings are echoed in other disciplines across diverse contexts. For example, during the civil war in Sri Lanka, it was shown that "the first common community coping strategy was to fall back on group-based networks and family ties" (Goodhand et al. 2000, p. 401). Similarly, research in post-conflict Cambodia (Colletta and Cullen 2000) has emphasised the importance of social ties in supporting an individual's process of emotional recovery. In South Africa, young people who were engaged in the political struggle against the apartheid government were shown to be psychologically protected from the worst impacts of state violence by community members who offered their support and considered them to be heroes (Dawes 1990). In general, the way in which societies emerge towards peace is thought to depend largely on local capacities "to rebuild social networks and a sense of community" (Summerfield 1997, p. 1568).

Violent conflict places a heavy strain on the capacities of family and social networks to support each other. Often the conditions associated with or resulting from violent conflict— for example political uncertainty, forced displacement, food insecurity, illness and death— increase the strain on available local resources (Ager et al. 2005) leaving caregivers unable to meet basic physical needs of their families (Ager 2006). In such situations it is possible that "systems that are normally sources of support and protection, such as the family, become sources of risk and developmental damage" (Boothby et al. 2006, p. 5). The constraints of surviving in conditions of violent conflict can distort "the powerful socializing influence of the family toward abusive and malign effects" (Ager 2006, p. 50). Multiple studies have shown how violence can negatively feedback on parental capacities (Buka

et al. 2001, Lynch and Cicchetti 2002), with research showing that the stress associated with violent conflict and its resulting social instability may lead to an increased incidence of physical, sexual and emotional abuse of children (Triplehorn and Chen 2006, p. 228). For example, as seen among young people in Palestine, domestic violence can have an even greater negative impact on children's psychological well-being than political violence (al-Krenawi et al. 2007). In Sri Lanka, the complex feedback between political violence and family functioning is demonstrated via pathways through which child abuse is linked to paternal substance abuse which is in turn related to the levels of exposure to war-related violence (Catani et al. 2008).

As will be discussed in Chapter 5, the capacity of young people to access social support in the Kivus is highly constrained by the scarcity of resources facing most families.²⁸ The material constraints imposed by the structures of violence have consequently reduced the availability of social support, considerably affecting the ways in which young people are able to rely on traditional social support networks. Although in the past, Congolese families provided the main source of support for young people, decades of structural and political violence have had a profound impact on the material and economic capacities of parents and families.²⁹ Struggling with unemployment, poverty, displacement and instability, families are no longer able to offer the support that they once did. As well as wearing down the capacities of parents and families to support their children, the structures of violence have had a profound impact on broader social support systems in the DRC. Social support was once situated within networks of reciprocity and protection in the form of patronage, but extreme material constraints have since led to a breakdown of the traditional "economy of obligation" (see Chabal 2009, p. 111).

In its place is a social system which has been transformed by monetised exchange, generalised conditions of poverty, and the distrust associated with decades of political and structural violence. Once strictly regulated by society and tradition, today patronage ties in the DRC have become informalised and often violent, reducing options for self-protection and offering little support in ensuring long-term survival. By reinforcing inequalities without affording the traditional assurances of protection, contemporary patronage ties in the DRC serve as a less reliable source of social support than they once may have for young people. However, with few alternative means of accessing social support, young people have little choice but to invest in these relationships and thus ultimately reinforce their own positions of weakness and dependence.

MEANING ATTRIBUTION

The third element of the coping framework elaborated in this thesis builds on the resilience theory contention that meaning attribution- or "how people think about their experiences and how they incorporate them into their overall schema of themselves, their environment, and their relationships with other people" (Rutter 2000, p. 674)- is an essential element of how individuals cope with

²⁸ The important relationship between access to material resources and capacities for effective coping are raised by Ungar (2008), who argues that a "child who makes the most out of whatever is available to him or her should be considered resilient" (Ungar 2008, p. 221). Although a focus on resources is helpful, such a conception of resilience obscures the fact that such individuals are merely surviving, not thriving, as resilience theory would require.

²⁹ The economic situation in the country was dire when Kabila took control in 1996, well before the 1996- 2003 wars began. As stated by Stearns (2011, p. 165) in 1996: "5 percent of the population had salaried jobs; many of those worked for the state on salaries as low as five dollars a month. There were 120,000 soldiers and 600,000 civil servants to pay and only 2,000 miles of paved roads in the twelfth largest country in the world."

adversity. The human search for meaning in life is one of the foundational themes in Western psychology, examining how individuals maintain mental representations of expected paradigms which determine how they perceive the world in which they live (Bruner and Postman 1949). The psychologically protective process of meaning attribution has been explained as follows:

People are meaning-makers insofar as they seem compelled to establish mental representations of expected relations that tie together elements of their external world, elements of the self, and most importantly, bind the self to the external world. When elements of perceived reality are encountered that do not seem to be part of people's existing relational structures, or that resist relational integration, these inconsistent elements provoke a "feeling of the absurd," a disconcerting sense of fundamental incongruity that motivates people to re-establish a sense of normalcy and coherence in their lives. (Heine et al. 2006, p. 89)

The search for coherence and normalcy was studied extensively after World War II as psychologists tried to make sense of and give meaning to the Holocaust. Viktor Frankl's (2006 [1959]) foundational studies with Holocaust survivors attempted to understand how people were able to construct and reconstruct meaning of their experiences in the concentration camps; one of his main conclusions was that a 'will to meaning' is the primordial drive which motivates human experience. This will to meaning is further explored by Crumbaugh and Maholick (1964, p. 200), who argue that an inability to attribute meaning to life events leads individuals to become 'existentially frustrated' and mentally depressed; in this way, the attribution of meaning protects people from the development of psychopathology following experiences of extreme adversity.

Psychologists working with young people in contexts of political violence have shown that their long-term well-being is directly linked to the meaning that they attach to events they have experienced (Rutter 2000, Boothby et al. 2006, Slone and Shoshani 2008, Barber 2009b).³⁰ The role of political ideology is considered to be especially important in meaning attribution (Garbarino et al. 1991). For example, building on earlier research which confirmed the protective role of ideological commitment among Holocaust survivors (Bettelheim 1943), Punamaki (1996) explores the ways in which ideology helps Israeli children deal with contemporary political violence. According to Punamaki's study, the more direct a child's experience of political violence, the more developed their ideological commitment; the stronger their ideological commitment, the less they suffer from psychosocial problems. Conversely, weak ideological commitment is associated with increased feelings of anxiety, insecurity and depression. Subsequent studies with Israeli school children show that processes of meaning attribution through "the use of ideology" and "assessment of meaning" contribute to strengthened resilience (Slone and Shoshani 2008, p. 351). Similar conclusions have been drawn on the protective role of ideology among Palestinian children (Quota et al. 2001). In the context of the United States, ideology is also thought to strengthen capacities for coping among young ethnic minorities who experience less psychological stress when they belong to religious groups which espouse clear political ideologies (Garbarino et al. 1991). More recent studies on the impact of the 11 September 2001 attacks demonstrate that young people who were able to attribute meaning to the events expressed fewer symptoms of anxiety (Hock et al. 2004).

³⁰ The sense of coherence and predictability between an individual's internal and external environment which is essential for coping with adversity (Werner and Smith 1992) can be derived from political or religious ideology, especially in contexts affected by political violence (Punamaki 1996, Hart 2008, Barber 2009b).

A comparative study conducted by Barber (2009b) of the psychological impacts of violence on Palestinian and Bosnian youth shows how “an ability to understand the conflict (i.e. interpret, make sense of it) was a significant parameter that distinguished the degree to which youth felt injured by the violence” (ibid., p. 289). Through his presentation of narrative data, Barber shows how the depth of political and social meaning applied to the conflict in Palestine is highly psychologically protective and helps young people to effectively cope with political violence. In contrast, Barber finds that in Bosnia, young people do not apply meaning to their experiences of war; as a consequence “the lack of this explanatory information- in any of the variety of cultural, political, historical, or religious systems that it could have been packaged- was what frightened, embittered, and traumatized the Bosnian youth” (ibid., p. 302). The protective role of political ideology is similarly documented in studies conducted among South African youth, which demonstrate how ideological commitment during the struggle against apartheid served as a protective factor for young people (Dawes 1990); youth activists came to be known “as heroes because they had helped to defend the community from attack. They were described as ‘liberators of our people’” (ibid., p. 24). The community-level discourse which was mobilised towards liberation from the apartheid regime gave meaning to the violence; this meaning helped youth to mediate the negative psychosocial effects of violent government oppression.

Although in some cases the attribution of meaning can be protective to young people, in others it can be damaging to their capacities for coping with violence. For example, a study conducted with more than 3,000 Palestinian secondary school students demonstrates that exposure to events which are perceived as “humiliating” and “unjust” are correlated with increased reports of subjective health complaints (Giacaman et al. 2008, p. 563). Research by Wessells and Strang (2006, p. 204) explores how processes of ‘enemy imagining’, such as the portrayal of political opponents “as demonic, savage and inhumane” can lead to increased fear among young people, as well as to the rationalisation of acts of violence against others. In this way, political ideology can contribute to the hatreds and enmities that perpetuate violence.

As with ideology, identity has been shown to interact with young people’s coping processes in contexts affected by violence. A powerful and flexible construct, identity is represented by “a set of beliefs, values and subjective perceptions which are both eminently malleable and susceptible to change over time” (Chabal and Daloz 1999, p. 56). In situations of violent conflict, identity can serve a psychologically protective function, even as it can also contribute to continued violence. As advanced by Allen and Seaton (1999, p. 3):

once violence starts, ethnic identities become social facts, they are quickly ascribed to people whether or not they want to have them, and many protagonists will not hesitate in giving highly essentialist ethnic explanations for what they are doing.

The existence of identity groupings- of ‘us’ versus ‘them’ or other ‘enemy’ categorisations- can help to provide meaning and coherence to experiences of suffering and loss. Research in Northern Ireland on the impacts of the conflict on children (Muldoon, Trew and Kilpatrick 2000) shows that a sense of identity can protect children by helping them draw meaning from the acts of violence around them, even as this meaning serves to perpetuate violence.

Often, interpretations of political and identity-based violence may lead to the reinforcement of a shared sense of victimisation. As will be evident through the empirical data documented in Chapter 6 below, victimisation has been shown to help individuals cope with collective experiences of violence, even as the selective remembrance of ‘chosen traumas’ common in victim discourses leads to situations where “communal memories serve as conduits through which senior generations pass on their fear and hatred to younger generations, who are expected to carry the struggle forward” (Wessells and Strang 2006, p. 203- 204). Collective processes of meaning making are thus considered to be an important aspect of the social and political processes through which violence is either reproduced or transformed (McEvoy-Levy 2006). Although victim-based meanings are psychologically protective,³¹ what also results is an inter-generational transfer of violence- a process which demonstrates a psychological variation of Bourdieu’s (2000) ‘law of conservation of violence’.

The three components of the coping framework detailed above will be elaborated in chapters 4- 6 below. Presenting empirical data collected from my research participants, Chapter 4 will look specifically at the individual coping mechanisms of *la débrouille* and submission. Chapter 5 will consider the role of social support mechanisms as part of coping processes, specifically patronage relations and the function of victimhood. The role of meaning attribution within young people’s coping processes will be examined in Chapter 6. Chapter 3 now presents the methodology used for this research.

³¹ Fassin and Rechtman (2009, p. 17) quote Todorov (1995) who states that “Being a victim gives you the right to complain, to protest, to make demands.”

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the methodology developed for this research project. It first discusses the preparations made for fieldwork, including ethical and security concerns. Next, it describes the process of data collection, including the timeframe for the research, protecting confidentiality, negotiating consent, the sample, the issues of compensation and expectations, the data collection tools used, and some reflections on the challenges of data verification. Finally, it provides an overview of the process of data analysis which occurred during fieldwork and in the post-fieldwork period.

PREPARING FOR FIELDWORK

ETHICS AND SECURITY

Ethics were the foremost concern in the development of this methodology, especially given the sensitive nature of the research, its focus on young people, and the volatile and insecure context in which it was conducted. To guide the elaboration of the methodology, I relied particularly on the *Ethical Guidelines for Good Research Practice* of the Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and the Commonwealth (ASA 1999), the child protection standards and guidelines which I had used in my years working as a child protection professional (Boyden and Ennew 1997, Save the Children 2004), as well as methodological guidance specific to conducting research with children in contexts of violent conflict (Hart and Tyrer 2006).

Conducting fieldwork in the context of the Kivus required careful planning and preparation. My knowledge of the context from having lived there since 2006 was essential in this regard, as were my local contacts who were more aware than I was of the sensitive security dynamics prevailing at this time and on whom I depended extensively. My first priority was on ensuring that the research could be safely conducted in a way that presented no risks to my research participants, those assisting me in carrying out the research, or to me. Although foreign researchers are rarely targeted or attacked in the DRC, those participating in this research project could have been placed at greater risk as a result of their association with me. Throughout, I carefully weighed the risks and anticipated harms involved with the research and the feasibility of going ahead with the data collection.

During the data collection period between 2010- 2011, government-led, UN-supported military operations were being conducted against the FDLR. Rather than being expressed as all-out war, the conflict manifested as sporadic battles over key mining and resource-extraction zones and generalised conditions of insecurity. The common operational scenario would consist of the FARDC attacking positions held by the FDLR, which were usually vacated just before the offensive. Following the retreat of the FARDC, the FDLR would then often return to conduct reprisal attacks on the local population. Although much of the struggle for control was over resource-rich areas, the military operations were accompanied in local narratives by a highly-charged Hutu-Tutsi identity discourse.

RESEARCH SITES

To gain as broad a perspective on young people's experiences of violence as possible, I chose to collect data at multiple sites rather than conduct a single-sited ethnography. The sites selected represented a wide range of geography, economy, identity, language, and experiences of violent conflict. This diversity intended to support a more generalised analysis of young people's experiences and to allow for understanding the commonalities and differences of their experiences. I also selected the research sites according to their accessibility; given the poor state of roads in the DRC, I would need to be able to travel to them relatively easily, and leave from them if and when the security situation degenerated. In total, there were seven fieldwork sites (three in South Kivu and four in North Kivu- see map on page 10 indicating their location).

In South Kivu, the three research sites were Bukavu, Mushinga and Bunyakiri. Bukavu is the capital of South Kivu Province, an economic centre for the trade and purchase of minerals and other natural resources plentiful in the province. Abutting Lake Kivu and bordering Rwanda, its politics and economy are dominated by the Bushi ethnic group, although migration from the surrounding rural areas means that other identity groups are also present. During the time of my fieldwork, the FARDC military operations against the FDLR were based out of Bukavu, and while there was a visible presence of soldiers throughout the town, the main security concerns were related to criminality or targeted political assassinations.

Mushinga, the second fieldwork site in South Kivu, is a rural town a two-and-a-half hour drive southwest of Bukavu in the territory of Walungu. Walungu is a largely mono-ethnic territory, home of the Bushi identity group. It is a predominantly agricultural economy, although much of the large-scale production practiced during the colonial period has since given way to subsistence farming and daily wage labour. Gold is also mined in the area. While Walungu Territory had been a central theatre of combat during the second war (1998- 2003), the area had been mostly calm since 2006. At the time of my fieldwork, the security situation was marked by criminality and occasionally by violent banditry and simmering conflicts over land ownership rights. Skirmishes between local families and military actors at the nearby Maroc gold mine were frequently reported but did not have a significant impact on the population of Mushinga.

The third fieldwork site in South Kivu was Bunyakiri, a commercial centre of Kalehe Territory. Bunyakiri is a two-and-a-half hour drive north of Bukavu on a recently refurbished road that traverses the Kahuzi-Biega national park. The economy of Bunyakiri is sustained by the cultivation of palm oil, while the majority of the population lives through subsistence agriculture. This area of Kalehe Territory has long been dominated by violent conflict, a consequence of its great reserves of mineral wealth and its high level of ethnic diversity. During the time of my fieldwork, the security situation was tense as operations led by the FARDC against the FDLR were on-going. Threatened or actual reprisal attacks by the FDLR led to frequent waves of population displacement, while several local Mayi-mayi groups had re-emerged. The level of distrust among the population was high.

My four research sites in North Kivu were Goma, Kitchanga, Butembo and Lubero. Goma is the capital of North Kivu Province, a dynamic city bordering Rwanda and abutting the northern edge of Lake Kivu. It is a centre of commerce and trade, particularly of natural resources mined throughout the province. Goma has long hosted large numbers of people from the surrounding areas displaced

by the armed conflict. There is a heavy military presence visible throughout the city, while the uncontrolled flow of arms contributes to a generalised situation of criminality and violence among the civilian population. There is also a highly visible presence of the UN peacekeeping mission as well as of international humanitarian actors.

Kitchanga was the second fieldwork site in North Kivu. A three-hour drive north-west of Goma, Kitchanga is situated in Masisi Territory. It is an area of extremely fertile land, high ethnic diversity and significant resource wealth. As described above, the contested and often violent politics of land ownership in Masisi Territory have led to a situation where most of the land is owned by political and economic elite who live in Goma, Kinshasa, or in neighbouring Rwanda, and who use it for large-scale farming or for grazing cattle. These elite rely on military commanders to protect their large land holdings while other local militia mobilise to control of natural resource extraction and trade routes. Throughout my time in the Kivus, Kitchanga was dominated by the CNDP, and tension and distrust between the Rwandaphone and non-Rwandaphone populations remained high. The majority of the population has been regularly displaced by the violence; having lost access to their land they have thus been rendered dependent on daily wage labour for their survival.

The third research site in North Kivu was the town of Lubero, the centre of Lubero Territory. The economy of Lubero is based on agriculture, including of coffee and cinchona, although the majority of the population depends on subsistence agriculture. During the wars and in the wake of more recent waves of violence in North Kivu and Ituri Territory in Oriental Province, Lubero hosted large numbers of displaced people. During the period of fieldwork in 2011 there was little in the way of military activity in the town, although local militia forces were active in the surrounding area, mostly engaged in the looting of villages and fields.

Butembo was the fourth fieldwork site in North Kivu. It is a commercial centre dominated by the Nande ethnic group, known throughout the DRC for their business acumen. Commerce and trade represents an important aspect of the Butembo economy, benefitting especially from close linkages with Uganda, while agriculture is also key to the local economy. During the wars, Butembo was relatively unaffected by direct violence, although it hosted large numbers of displaced people from Ituri. At the time of fieldwork, the main security concerns related to occasional skirmishes between families over contested land, while targeted assassinations were also common in town.

GAINING ACCESS

My methods for gaining access to the research sites varied between South Kivu and North Kivu. In South Kivu, I relied on relationships with NGOs which I had previously established through earlier work in the province in 2009. My research in Bukavu was facilitated by *Laissez l'Afrique Vivre*, a local NGO which provides skills training support to young people in Bukavu and several other towns in South Kivu. In Mushinga, my research was facilitated through *Cris d'Afrique*, a small local organisation that facilitates income-generating projects for young people. In Bunyakiri, I was aided by *Action pour la Paix et la Concorde*, an organisation that conducts research on peace and conflict. The directors and staff of each organisation fully supported the research, and helped me to prepare each site. Having shared with them my research objectives, they provided insights and suggestions for further refining my approach, and served as key adult informants throughout the fieldwork period. Given the levels of distrust prevailing throughout the Kivus, among Congolese but also of

external researchers, in Mushinga and Bunyakiri especially these research collaborators were instrumental in negotiating my presence with local authorities. Staff or interns of each organisation provided translation support as needed. For my fieldwork in North Kivu, War Child UK and Save the Children UK provided the logistical support in terms of travel and paid the salaries of my research assistants and translators. Their longer-term programme presence in each of research sites meant that they were well known by local authorities and generally accepted by the population, both factors which facilitated my access.

DATA COLLECTION

TIMEFRAME

My fieldwork was conducted in several phases between 2010- 2011.³² The research in South Kivu was conducted over a concentrated period of five months, from March- July 2010; during this time, I had extensive contact with the research participants which allowed me to gather a comparatively rich set of data.³³ Repeated return visits to South Kivu in 2010 and 2011 allowed me to follow up with my research participants, while on-going telephone and email contact with them in 2012 allowed me to stay updated with several of them. In contrast to my 'independent researcher' status in South Kivu, in North Kivu my fieldwork was conducted in association with two international child protection organisations. My data collection in Goma in June and July 2010 occurred when I was affiliated with War Child UK, an NGO for which I conducted a study on community-based child protection mechanisms.³⁴ From July- September 2011, I collected data in affiliation with Save the Children UK, and NGO for which I conducted a study into the barriers preventing young people from accessing formal education.³⁵ In contrast to my experience in South Kivu, the contact which I had with the young people in North Kivu was far more restricted as the participants were only involved in one focus group discussion each and were interviewed only once. Although the North Kivu data thus lacks the depth of the South Kivu data, it has provided a broad range of perspectives and allows for confirmation of the key findings emerging from the South Kivu data.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Given the security situation in the Kivus and the sensitive nature of much of what was discussed during the research, protecting confidentiality was a fundamental concern for me. I documented the data collected by writing notes during discussions and interviews; I did not audio record any discussions as this might have presented risks to my research participants were these recordings ever to be confiscated by state authorities or armed elements. In my notes, the names of my research participants were made anonymous to protect their identities and confidentiality. The initials used in this thesis do not correspond with the first letters of their names. In just three cases-

³² Although not considered part of the formal data used in this thesis, my previous years living in the Kivus while working with the United Nations (2006- 2007 and in 2009) informed this research in important ways, while my knowledge of the context and local actors greatly facilitated my fieldwork in 2010- 2011.

³³ From December 2009- February 2010, I also conducted research for War Child Holland in South Kivu, a consultancy which allowed me to gain contextual understanding of urban Bukavu and rural Walungu Territory. The contacts I made during this period were also extremely helpful during my fieldwork in Mushinga. In the empirical chapters below, several narratives from my work with War Child Holland are cited.

³⁴ This research is written up in War Child UK (2010).

³⁵ This research is written up in Seymour (2011b).

Emile, Vainquer and Professor Alex- are the actual names of my research participants used as they specifically requested this of me.

Although I did my best to ensure the confidentiality of the research, especially in smaller towns where I conducted fieldwork, my presence would certainly have been noted, and questions would have been asked of the participants of the nature of their involvement with me. In the case of the fieldwork conducted in North Kivu, my association with international NGOs likely served to protect confidentiality. In Bunyakiri and Mushinga, I relied on the discretion of my local research collaborators to ensure that my research participants were to the best extent possible protected. During the research and subsequent to it, I have not heard of any negative consequences faced by my research participants as a consequence of their involvement in this research.

NEGOTIATING CONSENT

Informed consent was negotiated prior to beginning the research and continued to be negotiated throughout the research period. For reasons relating to security and sensitivity, and also considering the low levels of literacy in the research area, I did not use consent forms. In South Kivu, my research collaborators contacted potential participants to scope their possible interest in my project and to invite them to the initial informational meeting with me. For those who were younger than 18 years of age, their parents or caregivers were also informed and their consent sought for their child's eventual participation. During the initial informational meeting which I held at each site, I introduced myself and described the aims of my research. I shared with the potential participants the type of research questions I would be asking, the methods I planned to use and what I hoped to do with the data I collected. Following this introduction, we discussed in an open manner their questions and concerns and requests for clarification. Once the data collection was underway, consent continued to be negotiated as I would frequently confirm with my research participants whether or not they wanted me to note what they had said. This process of negotiating consent continued to the end of my fieldwork period, when I once again discussed at length the expected outcomes of this research with my research participants. Before leaving the Kivus, I sought their consent to use their narratives in my writing. I assured my research participants that their names would not be shared- except for the individuals who specifically requested that their names be used. In all cases, my research participants gave their consent for their narratives to be used in my thesis and other writings.

In North Kivu, consent was also negotiated at several stages. With both War Child UK and Save the Children UK, staff from each organisation invited young people to participate in the focus group discussions and interviews, seeking the consent of the parents of those who were younger than 18 years of age. At the beginning of each focus group discussion with me, I again explained the purpose of the research, its intended use- in this case for my fieldwork but also to inform NGO programming. The participants were told that they were not obligated to participate in any way, and that they could end their participation at any time during the discussion. Consent was similarly negotiated at the beginning of each interview which I or my research assistants conducted.

SAMPLE

To reach the young participants in both North and South Kivu, I relied on the local NGO actors who facilitated my research. During planning meetings with them at the beginning of each fieldwork

period, we discussed at length the profile and characteristics of those who I would like to be involved in the study. As described in Chapter 1, my objective was to focus the research on young people, however locally conceived; my only requirement was that were that they be willing and able to actively contribute to the research. In eastern DRC, much has been made of the ‘child soldier’, ‘rape victim’, ‘orphan’ or ‘street child’ labels, but for this research I wanted to avoid this type of categorisation as it is often pathologising and stigmatising for those so categorised. Rather than purposively targeting young people with specific characteristics, my aim was to include a wide range of young people, achieving as much of a gender balance as possible.

Between 2010- 2011, a total 304 young people participated in this research. I would consider the 44 young people who participated in the research in South Kivu as the key research participants, as my contact with them was over an extended period and on a much more personal basis. The 260 young people who participated in this research in North Kivu provided further data which confirmed much of that which had been collected in South Kivu.

Table 1: Number of research participants by fieldwork site			
Research site	Female participants	Male participants	Total
Bukavu	12	10	22
Mushinga	6	8	14
Bunyakiri	4	4	8
Goma	56	54	110
Kitchanga	25	25	50
Lubero	25	25	50
Butembo	26	24	50
Total	154	150	304

Although the focus of this research was young people, adults also served as key informants throughout the research period. Local authorities, community workers, religious actors, military commanders, NGO colleagues, neighbours, parents and others regularly entertained my questions, some as formal interviews or group discussions and many in spontaneous discussions. They provided me with contextual knowledge, historical background, and helped me to triangulate information I received from my young research participants. Adults were especially helpful in making cross-generational comparisons, providing a frame of reference from which the situation experienced by my young research participants could be compared with earlier generation’s experiences. I did not enumerate such exchanges held with adults, but they occurred on a daily basis and I regularly took notes during or following these discussions.

COMPENSATION AND EXPECTATIONS

The issue of compensation is an important and delicate one in the context of the Kivus, where levels of economic adversity are so high, and where the established presence of international humanitarian actors has had a significant distortionary effect on individuals’ conception of participation. At the beginning of the fieldwork period in South Kivu, I discussed the issue of remuneration at length with my research collaborators. In line with ethical guidance on fair compensation (ASA 1999), and knowledgeable of the conditions of poverty experienced by most, as well as the opportunity cost that would be associated with their participation, I wanted to offer a small material contribution to the participants. My research collaborators were however adamant

that no financial compensation be given as this would be unhelpful in the longer term and would only strengthen patterns of dependence on the part of the participants. I agreed that no payments would be made, and instead brought refreshments with me to our weekly meetings. In North Kivu, all research participants were offered a small amount of financial compensation- *'transport'*- and a meal.

In South Kivu, the issue of compensation was discussed at length with the research participants during our introductory meeting. In Bukavu, they initially loudly claimed financial compensation but in all sites they eventually understood and accepted that participation in the research was purely voluntary- those who were not interested in continuing (eight young people in Bukavu and two in Mushinga) did not return to the next meeting. In an effort to manage expectations, I repeatedly explained to them that there would be no material gain associated with their participation. However, given the dynamics of power, inequality and patronage in the DRC (a theme treated in depth in Chapter 5 below), there were certainly expectations that their association in this research would eventually bring them some longer-term benefit. Indeed, for some, their investment in time with me did pay off, as I would eventually help them with emergency health costs or school fees or other periodic assistance when needed.

In contrast, I did compensate my research collaborators for their time and support in organising the meetings and providing translation when necessary. In Mushinga and Bunyakiri, I paid them US\$10 each per session. In Bukavu, I gave a gift to the organisation's intern who assisted me. In North Kivu, the facilitation, translation and coordination was provided by the staff of Save the Children UK and War Child UK as part of their regular salaried work.

TOOLS

The multiple qualitative tools used for data collection were focus group discussions, interviews and participant observation, tools which I selected to ensure that young people's voices and perspectives guided the analysis. These multiple methods aimed to capture the "multivocality" of young people's experience (Altheide and Johnson 1998, p. 293), to document the "multiplicity of meanings and perspectives, and the rationality of these perspectives" (ibid., p. 307). Through the examination of young people's interpretations of their own lived experiences (Miller 1997, Bryman 2001), I hoped to gain new analytical insights. The aim was to make the research as emic as possible, "from inside the system" (Pike 1967, p. 37) of young people's experiences, in line with recommendations by Ungar et al. (2008, p. 168), who urge a greater emphasis on emic perspectives from "within a cultural frame" when researching young people's coping capacities. My fieldwork also sought to explore, as Vigh (2006a) does in his research with young people in Guinea Bissau, the processes through which "a group of agents seek to survive as well as possible when caught in a situation of societal and political instability" (ibid., p. 11). Contesting the typical situation in contexts of war where those most affected "have little voice in the events that determine their lives" (Robben and Nordstrom 1995, p. 10-11), I wanted young people to be actively involved in defining the research and in data analysis (see Ennew and Plateau 2004).

The use of a qualitative methodology was a careful and deliberate choice which contravened the quantitative approach which dominates resilience studies. Although I had hoped that my research might engage with the resilience literature, it was clear to me that quantitative tools would not

provide the space which I required for a true exploration of young people's experiences. For example, much of the resilience research uses tools to quantitatively measure the psychological impacts of specific war-related events. Tools such as the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (Goodman et al. 1998) which measures, *inter alia*, levels of psychological disturbance based on emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity and peer problems, or the Harvard Trauma Questionnaire (Mollica et al. 1992) are developed from a Western psychological perspective that focuses on the individual, while a tool such as the Political Life Events scale, assigns numerical values to young people's exposure to violence. The inappropriateness of using such tools in a study of experiences of violence is evident in the following explanation of the Political Life Events scale:

mild items (e.g., staying in a bomb shelter) were multiplied by 1, items categorized as moderate (e.g., absence of a close family member due to military or political circumstances) are multiplied by 2, and items categorized as severe (e.g., injury to a close family member as a result of political or military circumstances) are multiplied by 3. (Slone and Shoshani 2008, p.351– 352)

Such approaches aim to quantify the severity of conflict experiences in a way that they will be comparable across a range of individuals and contexts. Yet such attempts to put a numerical value to experiences of human suffering are arbitrary. They obscure the unique personal experience of each event, events which are themselves embedded in a long and complex trajectory of lived experience. Rather than offering theoretical clarity, the quantification of suffering- usually done from an etic perspective- can lead to false conclusions about coping with and surviving violence.

Eschewing a quantitative approach, I instead focused on the documentation of narratives as the principle form of data. Narratives allow for an exploration of "the interplay of history and biography" (Jackson 2005, p. 373), a space for exploring how "relationships between public and private, personal and political are continually negotiated within a turbulent social context" (Newman 2003, p. 7). As confirmed during my fieldwork, narratives provide young people with the opportunity to express their personal experiences of and perspectives on violence in open and flexible ways which they can control. By offering young people the space to tell their story in the way they chose, I also gained insights on how they "wished to be seen, what stories they wanted to tell of their lives" (Pickering 1994, p. 152). By listening carefully to young people's perspectives on violence, by documenting their narratives, and by creating the space within which they could voice their own experiences and analysis, I was consistently provided with insights and perspectives that I would have otherwise missed. The socio-cultural dominance of narrative discourse in the context of the DRC made this method especially appropriate and easy to use.

The collection of biographical narratives aimed to offer a more in-depth analysis of the lives of the research participants and a better understanding of how larger social, political and economic factors impact upon their individual lives (Boyden and Ennew 1997). The detailed information documented through life history interviews provided insights on the challenges and constraints as well as the opportunities present in their lives. Either in the form of biographical interviews or personal testimonies of particular life events, I conducted interviews with my research participants throughout the fieldwork period. Depending on their interest or the time they had available, I would hold discussions with the participants in a scheduled way or spontaneously when the opportunity arose. The use of interviews was important in providing the opportunity to explore in greater depth

difficult or sensitive experiences that they would not have discussed in a group setting. Of the 44 research participants in South Kivu, they were all interviewed at least three times each, although of those who became key research participants, these sessions were far more frequent and informal. In North Kivu, of the 260 young research participants, 220 were interviewed individually for a time period between 25- 35 minutes, with most of these interviews being conducted by my research assistants. Formal, semi-formal and informal interviews were also conducted with local authorities, government representatives, parents and NGO staff throughout my fieldwork period.

Focus group discussions were also used as a key data collection tool. A “purposeful, facilitated discussion between a group of respondents” (Boyden and Ennew 1997, p. 129), focus group discussions are useful in gaining a clearer understanding of local interpretations (Bryman 2001) and how accounts of events are influenced through social interaction (Kitzinger 1994). In South Kivu, I convened one focus group discussion each week at each fieldwork site throughout the duration of the fieldwork period. The themes related directly to my research questions- including ‘young people’s every day experiences’, ‘meanings of violence’, ‘coping strategies and daily survival’, ‘history of conflict’, ‘politics’, ‘aspirations’- but as the research went along new themes emerged and were often suggested by my research participants. In the three South Kivu sites, the discussions were held with the whole group- all ages and both male and female participants- as requested by the participants themselves. Only once in Mushinga and once in Bunyakiri did we disaggregate the discussion according to sex; this was when the discussion theme related to sexual violence, and the female participants requested that they speak separately from the male participants.

In North Kivu, the focus group discussions were disaggregated by age and sex. I conducted 10 focus group discussions in Goma in 2010 with War Child UK and with 30 with Save the Children UK in the four fieldwork sites 2011. For the 2011 data collection, the age disaggregation was according to the following age groups: 12- 14 years, 15- 17 years and 18- 24 years. This age disaggregation was in line with Save the Children UK’s research objective of understanding why young people have difficulty accessing formal education; by analysing any age-specific variations, they hoped to adapt their education programming accordingly.

Although the discussions usually took place in the space provided by the local associations which facilitated my research, in some cases unconventional locations were more suitable. For example, in Goma, a group discussion arranged with young sex workers took place at the end of the afternoon in the bar where they worked. Other group discussions which occurred more spontaneously could take place under a tree or in a tailoring workshop, or in any other location where my research participants felt comfortable spending their time.

The third main data collection tool this research relied on was participant observation. Participant observation often allows for local and global perspectives to become “explications of one another” with a “continuous dialectical tacking between the most local of local detail and the most global of global structure in such a way as to bring them into simultaneous view” (Geertz 1983, p. 69). Applying what Wacquant (2004, p. 6) refers to as “observant participation”, I would regularly visit young people’s homes, participate in their social events and accompany them in their daily activities. Through this time of “deep hanging out” (Geertz 2000, p. 110), I gained unexpected insights into the lives of my research participants, and an important balancing perspective to the otherwise concentrated and focused discussions and interviews.

Some of the research participants also offered written accounts and- in the case of one young person- drawings, a selection of which has been included in the chapters below.

DATA VERIFICATION

One of my most important lessons on the complexity of researching violence was taught to me by A-, a key research participant in Bukavu who I spent significant amounts of time with during the fieldwork period. She was 17 years old when I first met her in April 2010. During an early interview, she recounted her biographical narrative:

I'm from Kaniola, in Walungu Territory, a place where many people were massacred during the war. My father had gone to the mining areas of Burega [Shabunda Territory in South Kivu Province] many years ago. We stayed at home with our mother. She sold clothes in the market and would use the money from selling to buy our food. We didn't cultivate.

One night the AFDL came to our house. They demanded money from my mother. The soldiers began to beat her, demanding that she give them money. She refused. We [A- and her three siblings] started crying. The soldiers took a cord to my mother's neck to strangle her, so I ran inside to find our money. I gave the money to the soldiers to try to free my mother. But they took my mother behind the house and tied her up. They had machetes; they began to cut my mother's hands. We screamed and cried out for help. The soldiers threatened us, then threw gasoline on the walls of the house and set fire to it. They took us into the forest with them. They took our goat. They didn't rape me, but we had to stay with them.

In the morning we were able to run away. We returned to our village to find everything burnt, even the remains of my mother, even her skin had disappeared. We found part of her left leg, her head. I told myself and my brothers and baby sister: "We cannot cry because this is what the world is like today."

Our [paternal] aunt learnt of the attack. She came to get us and brought us to Bukavu to live with her. In 2004 there was the attack of Bukavu- it lasted one week. During the attack, many people fled. My aunt was caught in the fighting and was shot in the leg. I didn't understand how this could happen. I had lost my mother, my father had disappeared, now my aunt was seriously hurt. We didn't know if she would live... After two months my aunt got out of the hospital, but with her injury, she was no longer able to work. She told us we would have to start working to support ourselves.

My two brothers were very young then, they were 8 and 10 years old- they went to the street... My little sister was still a baby, she hadn't even finished her vaccines. I didn't know what to do... My neighbour told me I should look for work washing clothes. I managed to find a woman whose clothes I could wash. She had so many clothes! I worked so hard, for so long, my arms ached, it was so painful! At the end of the day she gave me 500Fc (US\$0.5). I was so tired. I went back to my aunt, gave her the money, and she told me: "Continue, this is how life is."

... One day I learnt from an old friend from Kaniola who had known my father that that my father had been killed by the AFDL during the war. He'd been buried on the side of the road, just like that. How I cried. I lost all hope then. I thought maybe I should die, I could drown myself, take a rope around my neck. But I knew that I shouldn't cry...

A- recounted her experience of terrible loss in great detail and with emotion expressing her personal courage to face the challenges presented by each day. Over the course of my research period, A- and

I spent a significant amount of time together; I would spend afternoons with her in her tailoring workshop, or she would accompany me to the market. In our many conversations, she did not mention her parents or the experiences of violence she had lived through. However, she would often mention her younger sister and her challenges in earning enough money to support her, and I once met one of her brothers.

It was not until February 2011 on a subsequent trip to Bukavu when I went in search of A- that I realised the complex dimensions of her narrative. In my efforts to track her down, I found one of her friends who was also a key research participant. According to this young woman, A- had since left Bukavu and was now living with her parents in Goma. "With her parents?" I asked, incredulously. "Her actual biological parents?" Indeed if, as according to her friend, A- was living in Goma with her mother and father and little sister, she was not the orphan as a result of such gruesome violence as she had portrayed herself as being.

I met with A- again in September 2011 in a subsequent follow-up visit as she had since returned to South Kivu. Our meeting took place among a group of other research participants, and I did not feel it appropriate to ask her for clarification on the situation with her parents. Somehow asking her if she really was an orphan or not seemed deeply inappropriate, as would have been a review of the biography of terrible violence she had narrated with such heart-rending detail seventeen months before. Certainly, parts of her narrative were true, but in any case, I am not sure that an established 'truth' would even matter for this research.

The narrative as originally told by A- offered me insights on how violence is narrated and interpreted by young people and highlights how presentations of violence have specific power in the political economy in the Kivus. When she told this story, A- and I had only met once before. I had then recently explained to my research participants my research objectives; she knew that my research was about violence and about how young people cope with it. Her narrative would therefore need to balance what she thought I was looking for with experiences which she thought would be worthy of sharing. Her perception of me would have included my positionality as a European researcher with access to resources from which she might be able to benefit. In all likelihood, she would have hoped I might eventually serve as a patron, providing her and her younger sister with the material benefits or access to resources they needed; as will be elaborated in chapters 5 and 6, this careful calibration of expectations highlights the importance of victimhood as a coping mechanism for young people. Over time, A- realised that I was a less generous patron than she had hoped, and thus her narratives changed, moving away from the gruesome and towards the banal details of everyday life. As I would later read, my experience with this kind of subjectivity is not unique: Utas (2005) in his research with youth in Liberia found that the often contradictory and ambiguous information provided by youth created challenges for his analysis, yet the value of this information remained "fully 'authentic' as active presentations of self in their own right" (ibid, p. 410).

My experience of A-'s narrative illustrates some of the key challenges and limitations of using narratives as the key source of primary data, particularly in terms of verification. As expected when working with subjective data, the ability for a researcher to discern any form of objective truth can be impossible (see Bloch 1998), especially when studying a theme as complex as experiences of violence. Additionally, my positionality as a European researcher and its associated inequalities and differentials in power in the political economy of the DRC adds a further layer through which truth

and objectivity require filtering. Yet my research objective was not to establish the 'truth' of my research participants' narratives, nor was it to achieve an 'objective' analysis of their overwhelmingly complex experiences of violence in the Kivus. While I am confident about the verity of most of the narratives presented in the thesis- having spent significant amounts of time with the research participants, visiting their homes, and aware of the context in which they lived- it is also possible that other narratives, at least in part, like the one offered by A- were fabricated.

Related to this difficulty is that the very nature of studying personal experiences of hardship and loss presents real challenges to data verification. Throughout, I tried to ensure that personal experiences and memories of my research participants were discussed only on their terms. While my research participants often shared very personal and painful information quite willingly, at other times details were withheld or their stories trailed off. In these instances, silence seemed to speak more powerfully to their truths than words could; as I did not ask probing questions in these cases, some gaps in their stories remain. I do not consider the possibility of fabrication or incomplete information to significantly detract from the data, as the stories which my young participants chose to tell are themselves important in appreciating the complexity of their experiences of violence, and offer further insights into how violence becomes incorporated, re-appropriated and conserved by young people.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis began during my fieldwork and was part of an inductive analytical process that continued throughout my research period. While my overarching research questions persisted throughout my fieldwork, each day new sub-questions would emerge or certain themes seemed to require more in-depth examination; I would then refine my line of enquiry in subsequent discussions and interviews. My research participants also guided the analysis in ways I had not expected, offering new themes for exploration that I otherwise would have overlooked and providing answers to questions I might not have asked.

As my data was collected in various stages, I was able to explore in greater detail the emerging themes as time went on. For example, through initial analysis of the data collected in South Kivu and in Goma in 2010, I was able to further refine the questions in accordance with the established research themes when I continued my fieldwork in North Kivu in 2011. By this time, a level of data saturation in response to my research questions allowed me to confirm the similarities in the emerging data despite the different locations of study and the difference between the longer-term contact with young people in South Kivu and the relatively brief contact with the research participants in North Kivu.

In the post-fieldwork period, the task of placing the extensive data I had collected into meaningful categories was an iterative process. As I began working with the data new analytical perspectives emerged. There were two analytical processes which were especially helpful in shaping the theoretical direction of my analysis: the first was establishing a 'typology of violence' and the second was a mapping of individual 'ways of coping' in relation to the structures of violence prevailing in the Kivus.

For the typology of violence, I devised a table in which I identified the key themes relating to violence described in the data. In this table, there were four columns: manifestation of violence, possible origins, possible functions, and possible responses. I then sifted through the data to classify it accordingly. Among the manifestations of violence there were: military battles, forced recruitment, pillage, reprisal, sexual violence, forced labour, extortion, repression of dissent, criminal acts, physical abuse, emotional abuse, economic exploitation, neglect, etc. The origins of these manifestations of violence ranged from historic, to economic, to social, while the functions included: control, rent-seeking, material gain, survival and protection. The possible responses by young people were: flee, resist, submit, seek revenge, denounce, deny or be silent.

Table 2: Sample of data analysis tool “Towards a typology of Violence”			
Manifestations of violence	Possible origins	Possible functions	Possible responses
Political			
Pillage/ looting	history of predation, few other legitimate means of material gain	survival, monetary gain	flee, resist, submit, blame
Social			
Rape/ sexual violence	materialisation of women, power over women, disempowerment and frustration of men	exertion of power	submit, resist, denounce, deny
Individual			
Transactional sex	lack of livelihood alternatives, materialisation of women	meeting survival needs	submit

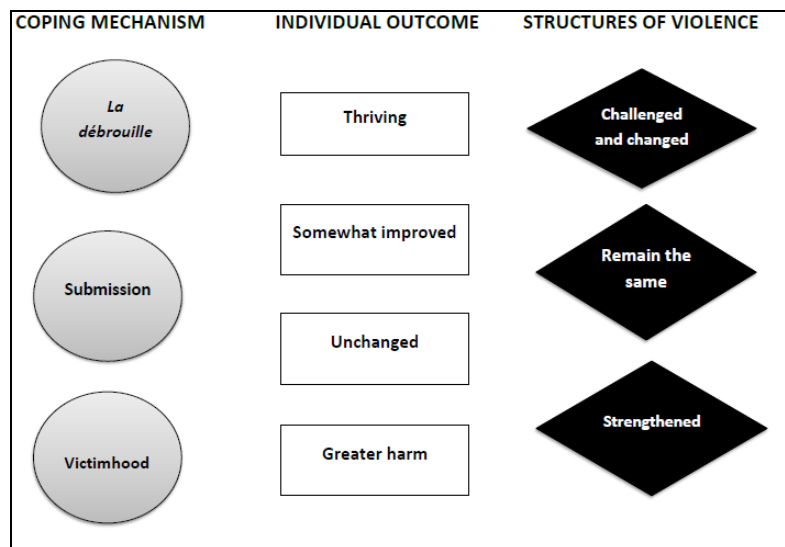
Once I had gone through all the data to ensure the main points were included in the table, it was then possible to organise the entries according to the kinds of violence, for example: military or other authority, family, individual. In this way the typology could be organised according to the expressions of violence as political, social or individual, which corresponded with the three overall frames of analysis in which I was interested.

The second key data analysis process during the post-fieldwork period was to sort through the data relating to young people’s ways of coping with violence. Through a review of the narratives, it was possible to classify young people’s coping mechanisms according to three broad categories (left column, Figure 3): *la débrouille* (or, ‘finding one’s way’, as detailed in chapters 2 and 4), submission and victimhood. These mechanisms of coping could also eventually be analysed from individual, social and political perspectives.

I then mapped the individual outcome of each coping mechanism (middle column, Figure 3): the outcome to any one response at any given time could be thriving, somewhat improved, unchanged or greater harm. Each coping event could lead to a different coping outcome. These outcomes were also influenced over time: i.e. one coping response might allow a young person to have a somewhat

improved situation in the short term, but in the long term this coping response might subject them to greater harm.

Figure 3: Mapping coping mechanisms and structures of violence



As my analysis evolved- and once the structures of violence theoretical perspective emerged through my analysis- I then mapped the various coping responses and outcomes to their relation with the structures of violence (right column, Figure 3). Through the data, it was evident that the coping responses adapted by young people could challenge or change the structures of violence, have no impact on the structures, or contribute to strengthening the structures. In this way it became possible to use the data to trace how young people's experiences and ways of coping with violence related to the conservation of violence.

These analytical processes were then linked back into the theoretical framework of the research which examined individual ways of coping, social support mechanisms and processes of meaning attribution, which eventually became the fourth, fifth and sixth chapters of the thesis. The data was then classified within this framework, with relevant narratives used to support the analysis. The process of fitting the data into the framework was iterative, and as my analysis progressed I would re-examine and re-classify the data.

In terms of the relationship between the theory guiding this investigation and the emerging empirical findings, the process was also iterative, feeding back on itself in a constructivist way. To begin with, the initial research questions and theoretical focus on resilience emerged directly from my pre-research experience of working in eastern DRC; it was in witnessing that young people were more capable of dealing with hardship and adversity that I was guided to resilience theory. During the data collection period, the iterative feedback between theory and empirics was reinforced as the empirical data I collected further influenced the theoretical analysis in fundamental ways. For example, while the initial research questions had focused on experiences of violent conflict, it was

my research participants who very early on urged me to include the aspects of structural violence in my analysis. The intractable connections between political and structural violence which were empirically evident led me to adopt a theoretical perspective on the structures of violence and to focus on Bourdieu's 'law of conservation of violence'- neither of which had I anticipated prior to fieldwork. Empirical evidence on social coping mechanisms also revealed the importance of patronage relationships, which eventually became the theoretical focus of Chapter 5. Most central to this thesis, the empirical data collected eventually led to my challenge of resilience theory, which I found could not be relevant in a context where the structures of violence are so pervasive. What has emerged therefore is a grounded analysis of violence as experienced and as narrated by young people in North and South Kivu.

CHAPTER 4: INDIVIDUAL WAYS OF COPING WITHIN THE STRUCTURES OF VIOLENCE

This chapter focuses on the individual aspects of coping processes, examining how young people cope with and navigate within the orders and the spaces of violence over which they have little control. Integrating narrative data from young people, it analyses two of the predominant tactics for coping which are relied upon by young people in the Kivus, specifically '*la débrouille*' and submission. It demonstrates how these mechanisms offer solutions for coping in the short term, yet simultaneously contribute to reinforcing the structures of violence in the long term.

INDIVIDUAL COPING MECHANISMS IN THE KIVUS

The coping responses which are chosen by young people are as countlessly varied as the experiences they confront. Yet my work and research in the Kivus showed me that there are in general three dominant types of responses which young people tend to rely on: *la débrouille*, submission, and victimhood. The first two mechanisms are treated in this chapter, while victimhood will be treated in subsequent chapters. Young people use these mechanisms alternately, sequentially or even simultaneously; their choices of coping response depend largely on the environment, other people who they may be interacting with, and the opportunities or challenges which they are presented with at any given time. Through their narratives, it is possible to see how young people rely on these variations of coping in order to survive within and make the most of everyday lives otherwise proscribed by the structures of violence.

LA DÉBROUILLE

As introduced in Chapter 2, *la débrouille* is a French term that is regularly heard throughout francophone Africa. It is used to describe the process of 'finding one's way' – i.e. using whatever means are available in order to meet one's survival needs (see Olivier de Sardan 1996) and explains how people are able to cope with adverse conditions. In the DRC, *la débrouille* is a function of everyday life which is understood by all, a concept which is particularly associated with the idea of material survival and earning a livelihood (Trefon 2004). Describing the Congolese economy of the mid-1980s, MacGaffey (1986, p. 141) explains how *la débrouille* was a necessary aspect of ensuring one's economic survival:

The extremely low wages, spiralling prices and scarcity of foodstuffs and goods for sale in Zaire's cities indicates a situation near mass starvation, but somehow the majority of people manage to feed, house, clothe themselves and even find considerable amounts of money as necessary. In the official system nothing works as it should and most people find their principle means of livelihood outside wage earning and the regular channels of distribution. They 'fend for themselves' (*on se débrouille*) in Zaire's second economy, in a highly organized parallel system of economic activities that is unrecorded in official figures and reports, but which must be taken into account to arrive at any realistic assessment of life in Zaire today.

Serving as a key coping strategy, *la débrouille* remains extremely relevant in the lives of young people today. As my research participants were keen to teach me, the response to the casual Kiswahili greeting when seeing a friend on the street: “*Unaenda wapi?*” [Where are you going?] is usually met with the response: “*Ninaenda kujidebrouiller*” [I’m going to find my way- *me débrouiller*] (group discussion, Bunyakiri, May 2010). The capacity of *la débrouille* was clearly demonstrated by my research participants who would engage in multiple tactics as they tried to ensure their daily survival. As they explained, one always has to be alert as the capacity for *la débrouille* depends both on one’s individual ability to appraise and make use of potential opportunities, as well as on the chance that such opportunities present themselves at any given time. To demonstrate the diversity of possible ways in which young people use their capacities for *la débrouille*, this section shares the narratives of three young people.

The first example is offered by R-, who was 19 years old when I met him for the first time in Mushinga in 2010. R- had been comparatively successful at taking advantage of the limited possibilities available to a young person living in rural South Kivu, yet his capacity for ‘finding his way’ required significant personal struggle. During his biographical interview, R- recounted how, following the death of his father in 2001, he had become responsible for the survival of his family:

My father died when I was 10 years old. From then I had to ensure our survival. My mother wasn’t in good health so I was responsible for us both. After my father died, I dropped out of school because it was no longer possible to pay my school fees. I travelled to the nearby mines in search of gold. The conditions in the gold mines were so demanding and I eventually realised that I’d probably never find any gold. So then I began selling beer at the mine. With that I was able to make just enough money for us to live with, but the work was so heavy. The following year, I thought I would try to earn more in the cassiterite mines further away. There the conditions there were impossible. It was so hard, and I spent all the money I earned just to buy food each day and to pay for a place to sleep.

I came back home in 2009, then rented some land to cultivate. I’m growing cassava now, and even with the *mosaic* [plant virus] we manage to cultivate enough for eating. Last year I also participated in a carpentry skills training programme [offered by a local NGO] and now I get some jobs as a carpenter, making doors mostly and some furniture. This helps me to support my mother, my wife and our two children.

R-’s capacity for ‘navigating the terrains’ (see Vigh 2006a, 2008) of generalised rural poverty required his ability to search out new opportunities and a willingness to travel far and work under extremely difficult physical conditions. It also required the skill of discerning when to end a venture that was proving to be unprofitable. R- was committed to ensuring the survival of his ailing mother and to supporting his wife and children. Even within the limited spaces offered by the conditions of structural poverty, R- did all he could “to expand the horizons of possibility” (Vigh 2006b, p. 31, as cited above).

When I made a return visit to R- in September 2011, one year after my fieldwork period had ended, he continued to demonstrate his ability to effectively cope within the structures of violence. His carpentry workshop was doing relatively well, and his family’s needs were provided for; R- was facing the constraints of poverty far better than any of his peers. For him, it was the personal sense of responsibility he felt towards his family which kept him constantly in search of the next possible

opportunity. R-'s capacity for coping with the hardships associated with rural poverty demonstrates what my research participants would frequently refer to as 'intelligence'. According to them, successful coping requires the capacity "to live despite it all. We depend on our intelligence. Intelligence is our capacity to know how to exploit our potential and to seize possible opportunities" (interview Bunyakiri, May 2010). This kind of intelligence requires:

the capacity to look for one's livelihood [*chercher la vie*]. We don't cross our arms, we look to others for help... Intelligence requires the ability to change behaviours... to think about solutions and to know how to realise them. It's knowing how to use what we've been given... Intelligence comes from experiencing difficulties. If one isn't hungry, one won't learn intelligence. (focus group discussion, Bukavu, April 2010)

The second example of *la débrouille* presented here demonstrates how, although often related to one's capacity for earning one's material livelihood, *la débrouille* also relates to young people's psychological, emotional and spiritual capacities for 'finding one's way'. T-, another key research participant, was 22 years old when I first met her in Bukavu in April 2010. She was in her last year of secondary school and the mother of a six-year-old boy. She had been born and raised in the commercial centre of Walungu, and her parents, who had been relatively wealthy traders before the war, continued to live there. T- described her early childhood years with fondness, a time when she and her sisters benefitted from not only the material care of their parents, but also their emotional support. T- and her three sisters had all been sent to school, an exceptional detail in contemporary DRC where many families are unable to pay their children's school fees (Ntagoma and Lubula 2008, Herdt et al. 2011).

According to T-, her idyllic childhood ended with the 1998- 2003 phase of the war, when Walungu became a central theatre of combat between the FDLR and the RCD. As was described by my research participants in Mushinga, the battles in Walungu Territory during this time had often been intense. They explained how

the Hutu³⁶ would attack the town and take women and men to the forest, demanding ransom. They would rape women. They would keep *les filles brunes* [the girls with lighter skin pigmentation] as they found them more beautiful. When there were battles, we'd flee to the forest without eating, so we were always very hungry. There were so many mosquitoes in the forest when we were hiding there. (focus group discussion, Mushinga, April 2010)

It was during these years of FDLR and RCD fighting that T- was abducted by elements of the FDLR. She explained her experience during her narrative biographical interview:³⁷

Some things one can forget, and once forgotten, they are gone forever. But other things cannot be forgotten. I was in my fourth year of secondary school. It was 2003, I was 15 ½. On 1 August 2003, I was taken by the *Interahamwe*. I had to stay in the forest with them for seven months. I was able to escape on 7 March 2004, and I found my way home. I was already seven months pregnant by then.

³⁶ In the Kivus, the appellation 'Hutu' is frequently interchanged with *Interahamwe* or FDLR, a politically useful elision which confounds the Hutu identity group with the Rwandan militia which had been involved in carrying out the 1994 genocide in Rwanda (*Interahamwe*) with the political-military movement that is now the FDLR.

³⁷ This narrative is also used in Seymour (2011c, p. 62- 63) and Seymour (2012b, p. 380).

Her narration of her abduction experience was brief, and in our many subsequent discussions, T- would not again explicitly mention her time with the FDLR or her experience of captivity. In contrast, she would frequently talk about the difficulties she faced with her family following her escape. On her return home, she was met by unexpected resistance:

My family told me repeatedly that I had to get rid of the pregnancy. They considered my unborn baby to be the enemy, '*le serpent*.' But I wanted to keep it. I believed it was God's will. I was hated by the whole family then, only my mother provided me with any emotional support. My family was so angry with me, they told me they lost their cows because I'd been raped. Cows are so important to the Bushi.

Despite the enormous pressure applied on T- by her family, she refused to terminate her pregnancy. For her, keeping the baby was a way to assert some control over a situation which she had been powerless to prevent. In this way she was able to exercise the limited possibilities available to her to make the best of her situation despite the overwhelming force of violence she had survived. The agency expressed by T- was also linked to what was grounded in her spiritual faith. T- considered her abduction, repeated experiences of rape and eventual pregnancy to be part of 'God's will', a belief which helped her to accept and make sense of her experience. Her commitment to her unborn child also allowed her to emotionally cope with the violence which she had survived, expressing itself as something similar to forgiveness for her perpetrators.

This capacity for forgiveness is similarly considered by Jackson (2005) in his ethnography of violence in Sierra Leone, where he echoes Hannah Arendt's (1958) definition of forgiveness:

Forgiveness implies neither loving those that hate you, nor absolving them from their crime, nor even understanding them ("they know not what they do"); rather, it is a form of redemption, in which one reclaims one's own life, tearing it free from the oppressor's grasp and releasing oneself from those thoughts of revenge and those memories of one's loss that might otherwise keep one in thrall to one's persecutor forever. (Jackson 2005, p. 368 cited Arendt 1958, p. 237)

Of the extremely limited choices available to her, T- chose to free herself of the hatred and thus regained some form of control in her life.

Within a few weeks of giving birth to her baby, T-'s family received a message from the FDLR that they were going to come back to take her son, who they believed belonged to the FDLR. To save herself and her son, T- escaped to Bukavu, hoping that the anonymity of the city would offer them some protection. She moved in with an older sister and began a life of *la débrouille* to find ways to support herself and her baby.

When I met T- in 2010, she was busily trying to earn enough money to survive. The hand-outs from friends and family and the small amounts of money she might earn from working in a dress-tailoring workshop contributed to her sister's family income including their food, and paid her son's primary school fees. With any amount of money that might be left over each month, T- would pay her own school fees; her aim was to graduate from secondary school and continue on to university. T- would

seize any opportunity that might become available to her, finding ways of surviving and making the most of the possibilities available to her.³⁸

Despite her remarkable capacities for coping, T- was aware that she might not always be able to fend for herself and her son. Given the social structures which continue to subordinate women in the DRC, T- believed that the stability and social acceptance she and her son needed to adequately survive could only be achieved if she could find herself a suitable husband. However, having been raped by an FDLR element and having had a son from that rape meant that T- was subject to strong social stigma. To deal with this, she explained to her son and to any prospective suitors that he was actually her younger brother who she was responsible for raising. By adopting this new narrative, T- hoped that she might one day get married and begin a new life.

In the time since the end of my fieldwork period, T- and I have stayed in touch through my return visits to Bukavu and over the telephone. In this period, her capacities for *la débrouille* have come under significant strain. By the end of 2011, T- had dropped out of her second year of university as she was no longer able to afford the fees. The sister who she and her son had been living with was struggling to support her own children and had consequently asked T- to leave. Living with a friend, T- was dedicating her time to earning enough money to support herself and her son. Her aspirations of completing university seemed to be falling out of reach, as the structures of poverty proscribing her life meant that pragmatic choices had to be made.

When I last spoke to T- in October 2012, she had left Bukavu and had returned to Walungu to work as a school teacher. As a high school graduate with some university education, this was the only job she could find. She was living with a relative, and each week would send money to her older sister in Bukavu who had finally agreed to care for T-'s now eight-year-old son so that he could continue his primary schooling there. T- considered her life chances to be regressing dramatically; from formerly having dreamt of being a university graduate to now having returned to her village as a teacher, the prospects of a better life in the city had already proven untenable for her. For now, her main priority was to ensure that her son could continue his education. In our conversation she entreated: "Claudia, you must come back to Congo. You must adopt my son. He needs to be able to continue his studies." For T-, *la débrouille* would require that she take advantage of any opportunity she found available to her. Unable to realise the aspirations that she had held for her own life, she nevertheless remained hopeful that her efforts at *la débrouille* might one day lead to a better life outcome for her son.

The third example of *la débrouille* discussed here offers insights into the risks which can be associated with young people's efforts to ensure their best survival outcomes. It demonstrates how the structures of violence- in this case protracted displacement and a lack of alternative livelihood possibilities- can transform short-term coping mechanisms into longer-term risks. The context of this narrative is Masisi Territory, an area in North Kivu which has long been affected by militarised conflict. In Masisi, the local population has repeatedly experienced forced displacement and consequently many families have lost access to their land, rendering them dependent on daily wage labour for their survival.

³⁸ It was also clear that T- hoped her participation in this research project might open up some possibilities; she was explicit in expressing her material needs at the start of each school term, and I did contribute to paying her son's school fees and her tuition while I was in Bukavu.

As my research participants repeatedly explained, the constraints of poverty, lack of livelihood alternatives and displacement from family land leads many girls to choose transactional sex as the most accessible and reliable income-earning tactic.³⁹ In the cash-based urban economies of the Kivus, young people would note that “some girls are so poor that sex is the only way that they can get any money” (focus group discussion, girls 14- 17 years old, Goma, July 2011, conducted for Save the Children UK). This phenomenon is also prevalent in rural areas, as explained by a 14-year-old girl in rural Masisi (interview, Nyakariba, July 2011, conducted for Save the Children UK): “We’re ten children in my family. There are nights that we don’t eat. When we’re in this situation, I have no choice but to prostitute myself to earn some money. This is how I survive.” Parents would admit that their daughters were engaging in sex to support their survival or to buy material goods, and while they asserted that they wished this would not happen, they felt helpless in changing the situation: “As we are unable to respond to the needs of our daughters, they will find their own means” (focus group discussion with parents, Butembo, August 2011, conducted for Save the Children UK).

For many people in Masisi Territory on the edge of survival, an armed attack on a village, looting of personal property, or a brief period of displacement can lead to a collapse into total poverty. One of the young people participating in the North Kivu research was S-, an 18-year-old living in one of the displaced settlements not far from Kitchanga town in Masisi Territory. This area had witnessed repeated waves of population displacement due to regular clashes between the CNDP and the FARDC and S- had been displaced several times in recent years. The economic strain on her family was heavy, and eventually her father left the family. Soon after having met a new husband, S-’s mother also left home, making S- the head of the household at 13 years of age:

About five years ago our father left us. Our mother eventually married another man– then she abandoned us too. We were three girls and three boys. It was up to me to take care of my younger brothers and sisters. My brothers joined the army so they could take care of themselves. But I was responsible for the survival of my sisters.

As seen through S-’s description, tactics for *la débrouille* are highly gendered in the Kivus. Boys and men are able to choose survival options such as working in the mines, serving as porters or joining one of the several armed groups active in the area. For S-’s brothers, the most viable option to ensure their livelihoods and their own protection was to enrol in the CNDP forces. For S- and her younger sisters, however, survival options were far more limited. They were living in a displaced settlement far away from their family land and thus could not cultivate, while the high level of military activities in Masisi at the time made work as a daily labourer in the farms an unreliable and insecure alternative. Unable to conceive of other viable livelihood options, S- turned to transactional sex:

From the age of 14, I started going to boys and old men so that I could provide food for my little sisters. That’s how I got pregnant the first time. I had my first child when I was 14 and my second one when I was 16 years old. I didn’t want to have children then but life made it happen. The money that I was given by men helped me so much that I was able to provide food for my sisters and to pay for our school fees.

³⁹ The narratives and quotes on this and the next page are also included in Seymour (2011b).

Initially sex in exchange for money and food was a temporary survival measure for S-, but once she realised that she could support herself and her family in this way- even to the point of paying her sister's school fees as well as her own- it became a more permanent way of earning a livelihood. S- was aware of the risks involved in prostitution and was articulate in expressing the difficulties that she experienced in this line of work:

Prostitution isn't easy work. I have to leave my children with my little sisters, and sometimes when I come home in the morning they're crying. But if I don't do it, we won't have enough to eat or to pay our rent. When I spend the night with a man, he might easily give me US\$5, or sometimes he'll give me absolutely nothing. He might threaten me because he is a soldier and so I have to return home without anything.

Like so many young people in eastern DRC, S- was left with a limited range of choices which forced her towards decisions that were highly rational, even if they came with significant risk to her own personal health and well-being. Her capacity for *la débrouille* demonstrates her ability to survive in the otherwise overwhelming constraints of the structural violence of North Kivu. As will be discussed in the final section of this chapter, such short-term coping mechanisms lead to longer-term risks which are likely to weaken young people's capacity to emerge effectively from the violence in which they are embedded.

My exposure to young people over the years in the Kivus suggests that transactional sex is becoming a more prevalent expression of *la débrouille*; although I did not systematically collect data on this trend, it was mentioned to me with far greater frequency by young people and their parents in 2011 than it was in 2006 when I first arrived in the DRC. People would explain that this increasing reliance on transactional sex was related to the growing economic difficulties faced by the population, including unemployment or the lack of access to their land for farming due to displacement and military insecurity. When I would ask young people who might be able to pay for sex given the generalised conditions of poverty in the Kivus, their responses included soldiers, businessmen, traders and motorbike taxi drivers (multiple interviews, Goma, Bukavu, Butembo and Lubero, 2010-2011) as these were the men who had access to cash that most others did not.

There is an expanding literature on transactional sex as an economic survival strategy in contexts affected by violence and conflict, a literature to which S-'s testimony can contribute. Defined as acts of sex in exchange for money, gifts or favours (Hunter 2002, see also Hoefinger 2011), transactional sex serves as a prevalent coping mechanism for women in contexts of violence where there are few alternatives for earning one's survival. Transactional sex as a coping mechanism has been studied in other contexts of displacement and political upheaval, where the extreme limitations on access to food and other material goods and lack of any other livelihood alternatives leads women to engage in sex acts to earn their living. A study conducted by public health researchers shows that Congolese women living in refugee camps in Tanzania were significantly more likely to engage in transactional sex than women living in the adjacent Tanzanian villages (Rowley et al. 2008), while applied economics research conducted in Kenya examines the ways in which women relied on transactional sex to cope with the negative income shocks following that country's period of political violence in 2008 (Robinson and Yeh 2011). Related research shows how the impact of disrupted market activity on individual levels of income can lead to an increased reliance on transactional sex in order to cope with economic stress (Dupas and Robinson 2012). Sex in exchange for material goods thus serves as

a type of “inter-personal insurance” to reduce individual vulnerability in precarious economic situations where “formal safety nets are often missing, and insurance through informal systems of gifts and loans is rarely, if ever, complete” (Robinson and Yeh 2011, p. 1-2).

The prevalence of transactional sex as a coping mechanism demonstrates a complex nexus of economic, social and cultural conditions, three factors which Hunter (2002, p. 101) describes in his research in South Africa:

The first is the privileged economic position of men, rooted in their access to the most lucrative segments of the formal and informal economy as well as to resources such as housing. These inequalities provide a material basis for transactional sex. A second factor is masculine discourses that place a high value on men having multiple sexual partners... [where] sexualities are unstable and are produced through men and women’s practical engagement with shifting economic, cultural and spatial conditions and relations. A final factor is the agency of women themselves... [as] women approach transactional relations not as passive victims, but in order to access power and resources in ways that can both challenge and reproduce patriarchal structures.

A similar description could be applied to the context of the DRC, where men enjoy a privileged social position, and where- especially in rural areas- women are responsible for ensuring food security for the entire family. The burden carried by women regularly featured in the narratives of my research participants, but was considered to be a normal part of daily life. In this way, the reliance on transactional sex as a coping mechanism by young women can be contextualised, understood as part of the more general situation of women in the DRC. Vainquer,⁴⁰ one of my key research participants in Bunyakiri, offered the following series of drawings to explain the dire situation of Congolese women in rural areas, accompanied by a written account which is translated next to each of the images:

⁴⁰ Vainquer also requested that his real name be used in the writing up of my research.

Figure 4: Situation of women in rural South Kivu
Drawing by Vainquer, Bunyakiri, August 2010



In this scene, the woman has multiple jobs. First, she is pregnant. She puts the cassava out to dry in the sun. The wood [that she has collected] is outside. The water container is empty. The child is crying out to be held. The house is in poor condition and her husband watches her as she works.

Dialogue (woman): At least take the child as you don't help.

Dialogue (man) : No, I don't want to, its not my job. I'm resting, aah!

Dialogue (child): I'm hungry.

Detail (left): The two rats enter the hut.

Message (bottom): We should help women.



The second scene: The mother goes to the field with two children, a basket, a goat and in the basket there is a hoe, a machete, and an axe. The mother suffers and the father stays behind doing nothing. Oh, what a life for this mother.

Dialogue (woman): Oh! My God, what have I done in this world. I don't get to rest, one child on my back the other on my chest and my husband is often without work.

Detail (left, top): Here the mother especially suffers due to the early birth of her baby.

Detail (left, bottom): The mice enter the hut, objects left outside that the father does not bring inside the hut.

Dialogue (man): That idiot left for the field. I'll continue listening to my music.

Message (bottom): We do not train women only for the fields.



Detail (top): There are multiple barriers which make our mothers suffer, including the police who always detain people, especially those who come from the market.

Dialogue (woman, left top): Do we work only for the barrier? By the time we arrive at the market, our basket is already destroyed.

Detail (right): A police officer imposes the amount of cassava to be given to him.

Dialogue (woman, left bottom): Another barrier? Oh my God, what can be done?

Message (bottom): The state should guarantee and respect personal property. Lets build for goods, not for barriers.



Dialogue (woman): Oh! My God what should I do?

Detail (top right): She cuts the wood.

Detail (left): The children cry because of the rain... The child cries in the basket.

Dialogue (child): [cries]

The 4th scene: The mother has stopped cultivating and is cutting wood. But when she notices the rain she will abandon the wood to take the children who are crying. She will attach the goat to the grass and the other things lay disorganised in the field. It is such suffering.

Message (bottom): To prepare them psychologically, lets have sympathy for our women.



Dialogue (woman): Children, don't cry, we're almost there.

Dialogue (child): When will we have freedom? Oh my God, help me.

Message (left): The woman is a human being like a man, not a donkey.

The 5th scene: She returns home in the rain. One child around her neck, the other on her chest, the basket full of wood and the goat attached to a cord that she holds.



The 6th scene: She is constantly suffering. When her husband arrives he demands that she give him food. The mother gives him the food but he asks her what food it is while the children fight over the food.

Dialogue (woman): Heh! And what did you bring? Your work is only to stay here at home and drink alcohol.

Dialogue (man): Hehe! What kind of food is this. I will beat you. You make salad for me.

Dialogue (child, left): Hey, you're taking it from me.

Dialogue (child, right): [cries]

Message (left): You discipline an animal but not a woman who is a human being.

Vainquer's rendition of the gendered experiences of everyday violence is a widely-accepted account of the specific challenges facing women in rural areas. It also offers important insights on how mechanisms of *la débrouille* within the structures of violence differ for men and for women. Such culturally- and economically-grounded differences also have an impact on the various coping mechanisms which young people are able or willing to choose. His account also shows how the various expressions of violence- structural poverty, extortion by state authorities and domestic abuse- are inextricably linked.

SUBMISSION

Submission is the second dominant coping mechanism discussed in this chapter which is regularly used by young people in the Kivus as they navigate and try to ensure their best survival outcomes within the structures of violence.⁴¹ Rather than considering submission to be an expression of weakness and helplessness, young people rely on submission as an actively chosen response, a protective mechanism which they adopt having learnt its value through their experiences of violence. Explaining how they were unable to influence the structures of violence constraining their lives, my research participants would lament their helplessness in the face of their regular experiences of political or structural violence: "There isn't anything we can do about it, it just happens like that" (focus group discussion, Mushinga, April 2010). At an emotional level, such persistent defeat is heavy to bear for young people:

Inside we are destroyed.... We're losing our morale. We are unable to defend ourselves. It's the authorities who have become our enemy... (focus group discussion, Bunyakiri, June 2010⁴²)

In the highly militarised environment of Kalehe Territory, my research participants had learnt first-hand the risks of attempting to contest the structures of violence. During one discussion they recounted how previous attempts to protest against the daily acts of extortion by police and soldiers had led to often brutal responses. They prefaced their account with a description of the conditions facing women on their way to the market each day to sell their produce, describing how they are persistently subjected to extortion by FARDC soldiers and police officers:

Women here are taxed at the market every time they go. If a woman arrives with 50kg of produce, like cassava, she'll be taxed by the soldier for at least 20kg of it...

⁴¹ Related to the act of submission is the concept of levelled aspirations which considers how individual dispositions and capacities for coping with adversity are shaped by the structures in which people live. The concept of levelled aspirations has been treated in studies relating to social reproduction theory and urban poverty in North America (Lewis 1962, Macleod 1987, Bourgois 2003). Levelled aspirations tend to occur predominantly in situations where "poverty circumscribes the horizons of young people in such a way that reproduces social inequalities through a 'levelling' or 'depressing' of their aspirations" (Macleod 1987, p. 8). The concept of levelled aspirations explains how individuals who live in socio-economically adverse conditions, usually at the margins of an overall wealthier society, eventually "come to accept their own position and the inequalities of the social order as legitimate" (ibid., p. 112). Poverty becomes entrenched and transmitted from one generation to the next as young people learn to aspire in ways that reinforce their disadvantaged position. As they grow up in conditions of poverty and inequality, structural poverty is reproduced and young people learn to yield to a future which offers few possibilities of positive change (Crivello 2009). As the poorest members of society come to accept their adverse life conditions, personal dignity is affronted (Appadurai 2004). For example, ethnographic research in urban settings in the United States shows how racial segregation, economic marginalisation and social alienation have transformed young people's aspirations; Bourgois' (2003) ethnography of street culture among young Latino men in East Harlem shows how young people adapt to structural violence in ways that entrench their own positions at the socio-economic margins of society.

⁴² Narrative also quoted in Seymour (2011c, p. 63) as well as Seymour (2012b, p. 378)

A few days ago a young man decided to try to defend an old woman who was being harassed by a soldier trying to tax her at a barrier. The young man was severely beaten by the soldier and the woman was forced to pay the tax anyway.

This beating reminded us of the time in 2007 when we tried to protest against the police who kept taxing our mothers. One day a police officer took everything from an old woman- all the cassava she was bringing to the market. She had nothing left and was desperate. We decided it was enough, that we had to react. We decided to take that police officer hostage and took his weapon from him. We carried him to the military checkpoint and demanded to get back the cassava that had been taken from our mothers by the police that day.

We got it back, but the next day the police and the soldiers reacted together. They arrested our school prefect. He was tied up and beaten severely. He was dragged along the road throughout the town to serve as a model for us all, and to show the students what happens when we try to stand up to the authorities.

In response, we organised a march and barricaded the road. Even university students from Bukavu came to Bunyakiri to support us that day. But then the military used their force against us. We were all beaten so severely. Two students died from their injuries.

It was then that we finally realised that power is not ours, that there is nothing we can do to protect ourselves. We are not able to protect our mothers. We learnt that anytime we try to defend ourselves, we'll be punished by greater force.

My research participants in Bunyakiri had learnt through their own experience the dangers associated with trying to engage with the structures of violence. Their efforts to stand up to the daily extortion of the police and the military were met with forceful repression, teaching them that the force of violence is greater than their will. Through their everyday interactions with armed elements- police, military, or those in positions of authority who could call on militarised support- young people had learnt that they could only yield to the greater power of violence. Efforts to engage with the system of violence would usually only lead to greater force being exerted against them, thus teaching them that submission to violence is the best way to ensure their own protection.

Submission to political and structural violence has become a learned mechanism for my research participants. They have been rendered powerless by the structures of violence which have "taken everything from us" (focus group discussion, Bunyakiri, April 2010). Their powerlessness is everywhere around them, constraining their physical movements and their horizons of possibility:

Since 1994, power has been with the military- their weapons are their power. We will do whatever they ask us to. As youth, we feel powerless, we feel bad. If we go to the field we have to have money in our pockets so that we can buy our way out if they stop and threaten us. To cross any checkpoint, we have to pay. We can't even get to Bukavu. This takes away our dignity. We are forced to do things under the threat of guns and knives. Their weapons keep us from moving and prevent us from talking. People should be given power, but here it's taken from us. (focus group discussion, Bunyakiri, June 2010)

This power was exerted by all the armed elements operating in Kalehe Territory, including the FARDC, FDLR and the police. All of my research participants in Bunyakiri had been displaced for many years, and their fields were too unsafe to access given the high level of militarisation in the

area and the concentration of poorly paid FARDC soldiers, FDLR elements and otherwise unidentified armed men roaming the hills in search of loot. Living in a situation of protracted displacement “along the roadside” – i.e. along the main road linking Bunyakiri with Bukavu- people sought safety in numbers and hoped to increase their chances of receiving food and non-food aid from regular distributions by NGOs and international organisations. However, access to this aid was rarely assured and never adequate, so despite their fear and the real risk of being attacked, my research participants would go to tend the fields. One of my 16-year-old research participants explained:

We’ve lived here on the roadside since 2001. Each week I go back to our fields to cultivate the cassava. It’s very dangerous, of course I’m afraid of being attacked by armed men... But we have to eat, so I go. (interview, Kalehe Territory, June 2010)

To adapt to the insecurity, people go to the fields in groups, or avoid certain areas on market days when there are greater chances of being targeted by armed elements in search of loot or opportunities to extort. In this way, survival tactics are reduced to a gamble as people merely do their best to reduce the risks of being attacked.

The structures of violence which define the spaces of each day in the Kivus are not merely associated with armed elements. Indeed, the use and threat of violence are strategies employed by local government authorities to exert their power over those who are weaker, demonstrating how Kleinman’s (2000, p. 227) ‘cascade of violence’ flows from the highest to the lowest levels of the political and social hierarchy. Although government authorities in the DRC are not themselves armed, they have the power accorded by their position and its potential to facilitate access to state resources to mobilise force as or when needed. In a place where power is determined by violence, authorities can use the law to their advantage, for example in threatening the incarceration of individuals who refuse to comply with their demands.

The way in which authorities use the structures of violence to their advantage at the expense of those in a position of relative weakness was demonstrated by Vainquer, whose name loosely translates from the French as ‘victor’, or ‘he who defeats’. Vainquer had been displaced from his home village as a child with his family, and had lived along the roadside for most of his life. Overcrowded conditions at home and increasing tensions with his father’s second wife had led Vainquer and his brother to move into a two-room mud-brick house a few months before I first met him in 2010. To earn money to buy food and to pay his rent, Vainquer’s tactics of *la débrouille* were primarily restricted to daily wage labour such as carrying rocks and sand from the hills to the roadside, or transporting materials between towns on market days.

Vainquer was skilled in art- a rare talent in the Kivus, where quality formal education is increasingly exceptional. As seen with the illustrations on the situation of women in rural South Kivu above, Vainquer would often supplement his responses to my research questions and complement group discussions by drawing sketches or illustrations. He had trained himself in drawing and painting and had gained renown as the local artist, painting signs for local businesses or NGO projects whenever such opportunities presented themselves. In an effort to make the most of his talents, Vainquer had recently tried to set up his own art shop. After having worked arduously at various daily wage labour jobs over many months, he had managed to save up just enough money to build a stall where he

would be able to receive clients and perhaps generate small contracts. With pain-staking preparation and great anticipation he finally opened his shop.

Within the very first hours of opening his business, however, Vainquer described how “the authorities came to me and demanded that I pay them.” The authorities included the *Direction Générale des Recettes Administratives, Judiciaires, Domaniales et de Participation* (DGRAD), or the tax authorities; the *Agence Nationale de Renseignements* (ANR), or the state intelligence service; and the police. Exercising their separate powers, these state authorities demanded immediate payment of various taxes and fees. Vainquer had no money to offer and knew that these authorities would be willing and capable of imprisoning him until he- or someone in his family- would pay the requisite amount to ensure his release. Vainquer was able to negotiate himself out of arrest, but was left with no other choice than to close down his shop.

Figure 5: Abuse by state authorities

Drawing by Vainquer, Bunyakiri, July 2010

He had just opened his artist shop but he did not reach his objective because of the fees demanded by the authorities.



Dialogue (Vainquer):
It's just today that I've opened. I don't have any money.

Dialogue (DGRAD): You need to pay your permit to open, this is the document. If not, you close.

Dialogue (Tax and ANR): You have to pay the ANR as well as for the receipt.

Dialogue (Police): You have to pay for security, if not you must close.

Comment (bottom): What can be done, for as we see here there are multiple charges which must be paid.

Comment (right): At each moment the authorities are there. Finally he closes the shop as he is unable to satisfy them.

Vainquer's description of the event was controlled and careful, yet the anger and the helplessness he felt on recalling this experience was palpable in his expression and body language. Powerless to

repel the structures of violence left Vainquer in a position which he had no choice but to submit to them. The aspiration which Vainquer once had for creating a better future for himself had been levelled by the forces of violence in which he lived. Despite his previous efforts to make a better life, the structures around him would not offer the terrain of possibility that is often associated with violent contexts (see Richards 1996, Vigh 2006a). Rather, Vainquer had to yield to the violence in order to ensure his own survival. Vainquer's opportunities for *la débrouille* would thus be relegated to carrying out daily wage labour with little reason to hope for advancement.

Vainquer would regularly reflect on the frustration he felt in his inability to advance, and would express his emotional and psychological sense of defeat. While he had once believed that his artistic talents would have opened up possibilities for a different kind of life, he had since lost this aspiration as he submitted to the forces of violence everywhere around him. His low morale permeated many of our conversations, and he still felt a sense of failure in not having been successful in realising his dreams: "Now I'm 20 years old, I'm an adult... Today I should be somewhere else in my life" (interview, Bunyakiri, July 2010). Yet he had also learnt that the structures violence proscribing his present and his future were too powerful for him to take on: "I don't have any means to change things."

As demonstrated through Vainquer's narrative as well as through the description of the failed uprising of the students in Bunyakiri in 2007, submission to violence does not just happen. Rather, submission is often the coping mechanism adopted by young people following a considered evaluation of events. Capacities for rational appraisal were evident among my research participants; for young people in Bunyakiri, their way of dealing with the structures of violence was best articulated by a local proverb: "When the tree is too big to cut down, we learn to live with it" (interview, Bunyakiri, May 2010). Submission has in this way become for them the best way to cope with the structures of violence which they have learnt they are unable to change.

VARIATIONS IN COPING AND THE CONSERVATION OF VIOLENCE

The coping mechanisms of *la débrouille* and submission serve as essential tools in young people's efforts to deal with their experiences of violence at an individual level. Their varied use offers insights on how young people perceive and interact with the structures of violence within which they live. My research participants were adept at using various individual coping mechanisms depending on the situation they faced at any given time, revealing their capacity for pragmatic appraisal and the ability to discern the most relevant action in a particular situation.

The varied repertoire of coping mechanisms available to young people living in conditions of adversity is considered by resilience theory:

there is a substantial range of effective coping mechanisms (or psychological defences), that the coping style that works best for one sort of stress experience may not work equally well with a different kind of adversity, and that there are substantial individual differences in the coping styles with which people are most comfortable... [S]tress and adversity cannot usefully be viewed as passive experiences that simply impinge on people; instead, they involve an active process by which people deal with their environments. On the whole it has appeared advantageous for people to have a varied repertoire of coping mechanisms in

order to deal with the range of adaptive responses required by contrasting life challenges.
(Rutter 2000, p. 652- 653)

By exploring the kinds of life challenges facing young people in the Kivus today, this chapter has shown how young people cope at the individual level with the structures of violence. The narratives reveal how young people are merely coping- more or less effectively- given the constraints of their environments and the opportunities with which they are presented. The forms of rationality demonstrated through young people's coping mechanisms exemplify what applied economic research terms 'bounded rationality', a concept elaborated by Herbert Simon (1957, see also Kahneman 2003) which considers how the human capacity for rational choice is necessarily limited by the complexity and constraints of the environment in which choices are made. Without access to perfect information as proposed by a rational choice model, 'good enough' outcomes might be the best that can be expected, replacing "the goal of *maximizing* [utility] with the goal of *satisficing*, of finding a course of action that is 'good enough' ..." (Simon 1957, p. 204- 205). In this way, the coping mechanisms of *la débrouille* and submission exemplify how 'satisficing' usually represents the best possible outcome available to young people. Such 'good enough' outcomes may allow them to survive in the short term, but do not allow them to engage in the structures of violence in any way that might eventually lead to a change in these structures; rather, the structures of violence are reinforced. In this way it is clear how the resilience conceptions of 'thriving' and 'positive adaptation' are not currently possible to realise for young people in the context of the Kivus.

Within the structures of violence, definitive determinations of whether or not an individual is coping effectively are not always possible. Recalling the definition of coping as being able to deal effectively with difficulty (as explained in Chapter 2 above), a lack of coping would mean not dealing effectively. Yet because the structures of violence are so powerful and all-pervasive in the Kivus, effectiveness can only be exogenously determined. Young people may be able to deal with the situation they are facing as effectively as possible- and thus they can be considered to be coping- but without being able to change or influence the structures in which they live, then a measure on the effectiveness of coping is ambiguous. For example, it is clear that R-, through his impressive capacities for *la débrouille*, has been able to cope effectively when compared to his peers in Mushinga. He has demonstrated his intelligence and adaptability and has consequently managed to support his family and build a relatively successful carpentry business. Yet despite R-'s constant efforts, the environment in which he lives conscribes any possibility for emerging from the conditions of rural poverty and political violence. As he explained to me, in the highly militarised environment of the Kivus, simply provisioning the wood for his workshop each week comes with significant risks; usually he has to pay soldiers, police or other armed elements a high price in order to negotiate his safe passage to and from the forest where he buys the wood. Although R- does everything in his power to ensure that his children receive the best care and opportunities available, his ability to pay their school fees or medical bills offers objectively little when considering the poor standards of primary education or the unreliability of health care services throughout the DRC today. Despite his greatest efforts, R- remains trapped within the structures of violence. Without a change in these structures, the possibilities for his children are not any more promising.

The complex processes involved in navigating the structures of violence means that the results of any given coping response can be equivocal and changeable over time. As was shown in the

discussion above, young people will sometimes be able to cope with their situation more effectively than at other times. For example, when I first met T- in 2010, I was deeply impressed with her capacity to have so effectively dealt with her experience of abduction, sexual violence and pregnancy. She was finding ways of surviving in the challenging urban economy of Bukavu with limited support from her family, and was from my perspective a caring and nurturing mother. She had firm aspirations for her future and for the future of her son. Yet, in the years between 2010 and 2012 her economic situation deteriorated, she was unable to find work and the social networks she had previously relied upon were no longer able to provide her with the material support she needed. Consequently, she dropped out of university and eventually moved back to Walungu to take up the only job she could find as a teacher in a rural school; her hopes for a better future had receded dramatically and she now expressed her increasing sense of defeat. Over time, her capacity at coping effectively had worn down; her coping capacities would likely continue to weaken unless and until a new opportunity- for example, finding a job or a patron or even meeting an eventual husband- might present itself to T- and thus reopen possibilities that she might improve her life situation.

Time is also essential to consider when evaluating the risks involved in young people's coping mechanisms. S-, who was supporting herself, her children and her younger sisters through transactional sex work, was proud of her ability to care for her family and would continue to make the necessary sacrifices to be sure that their needs were met. Yet the choices involved in S-'s coping processes created significant new risks: she had become pregnant against her will and she was constantly at risk of contracting a sexually-transmitted disease or of being harmed by her clients. *La débrouille* for S- entailed little more than a short-term survival tactic that allowed her to cope as best as she could with her situation in the present, yet which offered few prospects for an improved future.

In these ways, it can be seen how the capacities for young people to effectively cope with violence in the short term might become maladaptive in the long term. This possibility is also considered in resilience theory:

Although there are certainly a few styles of coping that are usually maladaptive, it has not proved easy to come up with a valid differentiation between effective and ineffective coping styles. (Rutter 2000, p. 653)

As with the use of *la débrouille* as a coping mechanism, the long-term consequences of relying on submission are equally uncertain. Young people rely on tactics of submission to ensure their survival in the short term based on a clear choice calculus usually determined by violence and force. As was explained by one research participant in Bukavu:

They took me by force... When something like that happens, you have two choices: either you fight or you run. If you are strong and they are weak, you defend yourself. But if they are in a group, or armed with knives or other weapons, then you run away. (focus group discussion, Bukavu, April 2010)

Submission as considered by Vigh (2006a) examines how individuals "might seek immediate subjugation in order to enhance their agentive potential in the long run" (ibid., p. 35). Yet in the Kivus, submission either maintains or contributes to reinforcing the structures of violence. This is in

accordance with Bourdieu's 'law of conservation of violence' in which individuals "subject or sublimate themselves in order to adapt to their structures" (Bourdieu 2000, p. 165), but by so doing also "contribute to their own domination by tacitly accepting, in advance, the limits imposed on them" (ibid., p. 169, as cited in Chapter 1).

Having lived most or all of their lives within the structures of violence prevents young people from imagining any other kind of situation. As explained by an adult participant in this research:

A child born into this has never known anything different, he cannot believe in another kind of reality. For those of us who are older, we knew something different. We have a feeling of nostalgia, we want to revolt. But for the youth, they know no other way. (interview, Bunyakiri, June 2010)

Young people in the Kivus today often express a definitive lack of hope about their future. This lack of hope is translated into the choices they make and the risks they take, both which are based on present-oriented calculations. So occupied with surviving in the present, young people are not able to engage with the structures of violence in ways which would challenge or change them in the long term. The dilemma presented is thus evident: the capacity to effectively cope with the structures of violence today becomes part of the dynamic which ensures the conservation of these structures in the future.

CHAPTER 5: SOCIAL DIMENSIONS OF COPING WITH VIOLENCE

Expanding from the individual perspective on coping with violence, this chapter now considers the role of social support in young people's coping processes. It shows how the structures of violence dominating in the Kivus have broken down traditional social coping capacities. To gain a more comprehensive understanding of the social and economic structures which are involved in young people's coping processes in the Kivus today, the second section provides an analysis of patronage in the context of the DRC and shows how, despite being transformed over time and by violence, patron ties remain a dominant coping tool for young people. The final section closes with a brief discussion on how such transformed social support available to young people may contribute to their capacities for coping in the short term, but can also contribute to weakening young people's long-term coping capacities, thus reinforcing the structures of violence.

STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE AND THE BREAKDOWN OF SOCIAL COPING IN THE KIVUS

Throughout the DRC, the capacities of families to offer social support to their children have dramatically declined in recent years (multiple interviews with adult informants, 2010- 2011). These capacities have been most seriously affected by the conditions of economic adversity, which, in the Kivus, have been exacerbated by conditions of continued violence and insecurity. Rather than associating their worsening economic situation only with the conflict, adult informants to this research would consistently assert that the resource scarcity they currently experience predated the 1996 war. For them, economic hardship has been systematically experienced since the beginning of the 1990s, as Mobutu's state began its retreat and civil servants were no longer paid their salaries (see Reno 1998, MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga 2000). Since then, parents have only faced increasing difficulties in meeting their children's basic survival needs, a situation which has had a significant impact on the material and emotional support which parents can offer.⁴³

The difficulties which parents currently face in meeting their children's needs were consistently raised in discussions I would have with adults throughout my time in the Kivus. One father, who is also a *chef de quartier*, or a neighbourhood authority, described his inability to support his family and the consequences this had for him:

If we're going to talk about the difficulties that parents face here, let's start with me. I have eight children, but only one of them has really turned out alright. The others are all just struggling to get through life with so much difficulty. I have no job, my wife does what she can to get food for us... Here no one respects me... My family no longer listens to me because I have no means to provide for them. (interview on behalf of War Child UK, Goma, July 2010; also cited in War Child UK 2010, p. 26)

Similarly, a mother I interviewed in Goma explained how the lack of material means to support her family has had an impact on her emotional relationship with her children:

⁴³ The most frequent cause of hardship mentioned by parents was their difficulty paying their children's school fees. From 1990- 1991, the state either no longer paid teachers' salaries- or paid a derisory amount- to those teachers who were on the state payroll. This began the now pervasive and entrenched practice of teacher's salaries being paid by parents (see Seymour 2011b).

We love our children, of course we do. It's our culture to love them. We don't want them to go to the streets. But since we are unable to care for them, children decide to go themselves. I try to give my children moral guidance, to tell them not to steal, to listen to the words of God. I give them a blanket to keep them warm, but they tell me they can't eat the blanket. Sometimes I go to bed as soon as I get home because I'm unable to face the questions and requests of my children. Sometimes I shout at them angrily in the hopes that they'll stop asking me for things. (interview on behalf of War Child UK, Goma, July 2010; also cited in War Child UK 2010, p. 26)

The lack of economic capacity to meet the material needs of their children has led to a perceived reduction of authority among parents: "We are overwhelmed" (interview on behalf of War Child Holland, Bukavu, January 2010). During interviews with fathers, their frustration with no longer being able to effectively guide their children was repeatedly expressed. A traditional chief in Bukavu described how his efforts to counsel his 15-year-old daughter against going out with older men would only be met with her response of: "I'll go wherever I'm able to eat" (interview on behalf of War Child Holland, Bukavu, December 2009). Demoralised and disempowered, many parents explained that they are at a loss for how they might re-assume their roles as primary protectors of their children. As another mother in Goma explained:

My husband is no longer here; it's so much harder for widows. I have five daughters, the four older ones all had babies at a young age. Already my youngest is becoming difficult-she's 12 years old. (focus group discussion on behalf of War Child UK in Goma, July 2010; also cited in War Child UK 2010, p. 26)

It was clear in my discussions with parents that they wanted to do so much more for their children. One father explained what being a caring parent means to him:

It means giving our children what they need. Food first. Then schooling. Then counsel. As children, we were disciplined, and it was done with love and with an effort to keep us on the right path, to do the right thing. Even with all the difficulties in surviving today, this is what we keep trying to do. (interview, Masisi Territory, June 2011)

Yet parents reported that despite their best efforts, they are increasingly unable to offer their children adequate support. Parents in Masisi Territory explained: "If we had the means, we would give everything for our children. We are just no longer able to" (focus group discussion with parents on behalf of Save the Children UK, Nyakariba, July 2011; also cited in Seymour 2011b, p. 17). A group of parents in Lubero Territory linked their lack of capacity to support their children with unemployment and the lack of available basic social support services:

We have lost our capacity to care for our children. There are multiple illnesses in our families, we need first to pay for the hospital fees, for medication. These are recent problems- it didn't use to be like this. Before there were jobs, and we could manage, but not anymore. (focus group discussion with parents on behalf of Save the Children UK, Lubero, August 2011; also cited in Seymour 2011b, p. 17)

In terms of coping, social support needs are increasingly expressed in material terms. According to my research participants, the inability of so many people to meet basic material needs is leading to the collapse of the family. "The home is no longer a stable place. Fathers are no longer able to care for their families; they decide to abandon them" (focus group discussion with parents on behalf of

Save the Children UK, Butembo, August 2011; also cited in Seymour 2011b, p. 22). This tendency of fathers to abandon their families was raised repeatedly during conversations I would have with adults, and was usually associated with a lack of family income or the search for employment: “the father goes away looking for work, and then just doesn’t come back” (focus group discussion with parents on behalf of Save the Children UK, Lubero, August 2011; also cited in Seymour 2011b, p. 22). The conditions of deepening poverty under which so many people live are preventing them from fulfilling their role as primary caregivers, leaving their children to fend for themselves.

My research participants also explained how material constraints have led to increased family conflicts, usually expressed as competition over scarce property and land ownership rights. In a discussion with a group of young men, they explained that: “If a parent dies, other members of the family will do everything to try to chase you out, to get your parents’ land from you. You’ll be left with nothing” (focus group discussion on behalf of Save the Children UK, Butembo, August 2011; also cited in Seymour 2011b, p. 22). Without access to land, young people have little choice but to enter the cash-based market economy where opportunities are extremely limited. The risks associated with the breakdown of the family unit and competition over property were exemplified in the narrative of a 17-year-old in Goma:

My father left my mother; he abandoned me and my sister. Eventually, my mother remarried and we lived for a while in her husband’s house. When her second husband died, his family came to chase my sister and me away. They told us we had no right to live in the house left by their brother. Our mother said that we would have to leave her. She told us: “If you stay in this house, then I’ll be chased away too. Your irresponsible father refuses to allow me to live with him. I have to protect the house and the things left by my husband...”

So my sister and I found ourselves in the street. My sister was hired by a woman as a maid and she still lives with her today. As for me, I spend my nights in small shops abandoned by their owners. Each morning I go to construction sites around Goma to see if I can find work, to assist a mason or to transport water for the builders. When that doesn’t work, I spend my days at the cement factories to transport bags of cement to the market or to other customers. At the end of the day I might earn 500 Fc or 1000 Fc [US\$ 0.5 or US\$1], this amount is never enough to eat well. (interview on behalf of Save the Children UK, Goma, July 2011; also cited in Seymour 2011b, p. 23)

As has been demonstrated in other war-affected contexts, social support is weakened by the reduced availability of resources and the inability of people to invest in and exchange with each other (Boothby et al. 2006). This is equally true in the Kivus, where the deeply entrenched poverty and structural violence make accessing social support much more challenging for young people. Economic difficulties are worsened by continuing military insecurity, associated population displacement, the inability to cultivate or harvest land, insecurity of trade routes, and the lack of employment opportunities. Regular looting or extortion by armed elements positioned throughout eastern DRC also means that a family’s food or material gains are dramatically decreased. As explained by some parents: “At each barrier we have to pay at least 200 Fc [US\$0.20], plus other taxes. If five bags of rice have been harvested, by the time we get to the market, there are only two bags left” (focus group discussion with parents on behalf of Save the Children UK, Boga, August 2011; also cited in Seymour 2011b, p. 22).

Armed attacks on homes and villages also have a profound impact on people's survival capacities. The looting of personal property can easily break the tenuous economic hold maintained by families living on the edge of survival: "During the war, our goods were all pillaged, everything was taken. We were left with nothing" (focus group discussion with parents on behalf of Save the Children UK, Boga, August 2011; also cited in Seymour 2011b, p. 22). Following a period of displacement to escape fighting in Masisi, one 17-year-old girl explained that "when we returned home, we found our house destroyed." (interview on behalf of Save the Children UK, Masisi, July 2011; also cited in Seymour 2011b, p. 19). According to a group of young research participants, the looting of animals in rural areas further weakened coping capacities: "We were left completely poor after the pillage, we were left at zero" (focus group discussion conducted on behalf of Save the Children UK, Boga; also cited in Seymour 2011b, p. 19).

In the Kivus, the structures of violence have so significantly weakened material capacities that reliance on social support networks has become much more difficult. This inability to rely on the material support of others has had a direct consequence on the level of trust between people. Contrary to the theoretical contention that political disorder engenders trust and social cohesion (Gellner 1988), distrust in the Kivus runs high, manifesting the interface between material and social bonds, and showing how the structures of violence have led to a breakdown in relations of social solidarity. As will be examined in Chapter 6, my research participants would often explain the loss of social trust in identity-based terms, even if the underlying problems were related to limited access to land or competition over scarce resources. As one commonly cited example, my research participants would explain how the Congolese population had generously received the Rwandan Hutu refugees arriving in the wake of that country's genocide in 1994. Demonstrating solidarity and compassion, they had offered refuge, food and other material support to people who were in need. With time, however, their acts of generosity turned against them: "We took them in as refugees and helped them, but soon they turned to extortion and pillage" (focus group discussion, Mushingwa, April 2010); according to my non-Rwandophone research participants, this past betrayal means the Rwandophone population should always be distrusted.

Adults participating in this research explained that the high levels of distrust operating in the Kivus did not always exist. As one example, a former CNDP colonel who served as a key adult informant to this research explained how the activities of the various militia and armed groups in the Kivus represented a relatively recent social trend:

This lack of trust between people didn't exist like this before. I grew up in that part of Masisi [where the battles were on-going] with all of these guys [opposing militia leaders]. We went to school together, we'd spend our free time together, stay at each other's houses sometimes. It's only in the last 15 years that we've learnt to become enemies. (interview, Goma, May 2009)

With the decrease in social trust, there is a reduced capacity to offer the social protections from violence that once existed. Such loss of previously-available protection is evident in today's decreasing ability to identify the perpetrators of violence; according to my research participants, acts of violence are more frequently committed by "*hommes armés non-identifiés*" (unidentified armed men) than they were in the past, when it was at least possible to identify one's perpetrator. The 'invisibility' (see Nordstrom 2004) of these perpetrators evinces a breakdown in social cohesion

and trust, as one is never sure who to hold responsible and thus anyone might be suspected. This is as true in rural areas as it is in urban centres, where lines between political violence and criminality are increasingly blurred and where upsurges in political violence can be used to obscure interpersonal acts of retribution. My research participants expressed their constant fear of being attacked by an unknown other; as will be elaborated in Chapter 6, the meanings they attribute to this constant possibility of violence often draw on blame and victim-based discourses, and are usually expressed in identity-based terms.

Despite the transformation of social support and breakdown in trust in the Kivus, young people have no choice but to rely on others.⁴⁴ While the options for accessing social support are limited, young people must rely on whatever options are available to them; in contemporary DRC this means depending on patronage relationships. The next section examines Congolese patronage systems in depth in order to explore how young people are able to access otherwise diminished, transformed and often dysfunctional options for social support which currently exist within the structures of violence.

PATRONAGE, VIOLENCE AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF SOCIAL SUPPORT

Contemporary patronage relationships in the DRC represent an important aspect in young people's coping repertoire. To understand the ways in which patron ties function in the Kivus, this section offers an elaborated analysis of patronage, first by outlining the theory of patronage ties, and then by tracing the shifting nature of patronage relations in the DRC in recent history. The final part of this section provides three examples of how patronage ties are relied upon in the Kivus today, highlighting both their essential function in survival and coping as well as their role in reinforcing patterns of weakness and dependence among young people.

THEORIES OF PATRONAGE AND CLIENTALISM

Patronage relations are an essential aspect of social, economic and political development, as has been shown in multiple cultural and historic contexts (Scott 1972, Tilly 2003, McLean 2005).⁴⁵ Patronage can be defined as a relationship of exchange, usually based on

dyadic (two-person) ties involving a largely instrumental friendship in which an individual of higher socioeconomic status (patron) uses his own influence and resources to provide protection or benefits, or both, for a person of lower status (client) who, for his part, reciprocates by offering general support and assistance, including personal services, to the patron. (Scott 1972, p. 92)

The terms 'patronage' and 'clientalism' are often used synonymously (Green 2011), with clientalism similarly defined as a "personalized relationship between actors (i.e., patrons and clients), or sets of actors, commanding unequal wealth, status or influence, based on conditional loyalties and involving mutually beneficial transactions" (Lemarchand 1972, p. 69). In analyses of political systems, clientalism is used to explain the attribution of resources in exchange for political support (Erdmann

⁴⁴ The role of trust and distrust in social coping processes is considered by Uvin (2009, p. 167) in Burundi, where: "The capacity to maintain relations with people who crossed you, whom you distrust, is crucial, for one never knows- they may be necessary one day."

⁴⁵ See: Scott (1972) for an analysis of patron-client ties in Southeast Asia, Tilly (2003) for a discussion of patronage ties in pre-revolutionary France and America, and McLean (2005) for an analysis of patronage relations and their role in state formation in Renaissance Florence.

and Engel 2007), expanding the analysis to consider patrimonialism- a term emerging from a Weberian examination of traditional systems of domination- as a system of governance where public affairs are largely privatised and where the state and public services operate clientalistically (Olivier de Sardan 2008). Further, Erdmann and Engel (2007) distinguish neo-patrimonial systems from patrimonial systems as those which maintain formal and bureaucratic divisions between private from public through a supporting legal framework.

In a patrimonial system, resources are distributed according to the strategic interests of the patron, with personal loyalties from the client securing a powerful social bond (Bangura 1997, Vigh 2006a). Interests and loyalties are similarly considered through the concept of “wealth in people” (Utas 2005 cited Bledsoe 1980), which emphasises the importance of being able to depend on interpersonal bonds of duty and obligation between a ‘big man’ and a weak client:

In the “wealth in people” system, one of the important functions for those subjected to big men (or big women) is that they have in their network more important people who can advocate for them when there is a need and that their problems will generally be relayed up the system to a level at which it can be resolved. (Utas 2005, p. 420)

The two core elements of patronage-based and clientalist systems are inequality and reciprocity, with the element of reciprocity distinguishing patronage from other relationships based on imbalances of power (Scott 1972). Because of the inherent inequalities of the patron-client relationship, the “nature of the exchange is such that the less powerful and lower-status individual cannot reciprocate with favors or cash, and therefore balances the account by providing loyalty and subordination” (Granovetter 2007, p. 161). In an ‘economy of obligation’ (Chabal 2009, p. 111), the patron offers resources and protection in exchange for a client’s loyalty (Erdmann and Engel 2007).

Considered from a structures of violence perspective, those in positions of weakness- or those individuals without the power to exert strategic influence (see de Certeau 1984)- tactically position themselves through subordination and deference in order to best navigate the constraints of the structures in which they live. Patronage relations tend to dominate in contexts where there are significant wealth and power inequalities and where there are no institutionalised guarantees of physical security for those in positions of weakness (Scott 1972). As will be discussed in greater detail below, by portraying oneself as weak one increases the chances of gaining protection and assistance from those with greater power within the system (McLean 2005). In contexts of economic adversity and political uncertainty, the client’s “very survival is constantly threatened by the caprice of nature and by social forces beyond his control” (Scott 1972, p. 102), thus making patronage support an essential aspect of ensuring one’s personal security. In an environment

where subsistence needs are paramount and physical security uncertain, a modicum of protection and insurance can often be gained only by depending on a superior who undertakes personally to provide for his own clients... When one’s physical security and means of livelihood are problematic, and when recourse to law is unavailable or unreliable, the social value of a personal defender is maximized. (ibid., p. 102)

As processes of economic modernisation have increased linkages outwards from a previously endogenous system, patron-client relations which were formerly socially regulated become less

manageable. As the influence of outsiders increases and material resources and social influences become available beyond formerly contained systems, traditional patronage networks are transformed over time. The reconfiguration of social and economic equilibria during and after the colonial era in multiple contexts serves as an example of such changes. For example, in Scott's analysis of how patronage relations adapted over the years from colonial to post-colonial rule in Southeast Asia, he shows how patrons became increasingly drawn from outside the local community, a shift in which "exchanges became more monetized, calculations more explicit, and concern centered more on the rate of return from the relationship rather than on its durability" (ibid., p. 107).⁴⁶

Although much of the literature on contemporary patronage systems emphasises their dysfunction and inequality, some researchers take a more positive view, showing how contemporary patronage systems can be beneficial as they build on relationships of trust and security and ensure a distribution of limited resources. From this perspective, patronage obligations and ties are

recognized as a fact of social life, and consequently are seen as legitimate. It is expected that political leaders will use them to secure their power and reward their followers. In places in which formal state institutions are not providing stability and services, patronage mechanisms can dispense resources, sometimes in a way that is recognizably fair. People may have more confidence in them than in weak formal institutions, and for sure expect that they will be resilient at times when formal systems fail. (de Waal 2009, p. 2)

Despite their transformation over time, patronage relationships remain an important mechanism for coping and survival. The reliance on patron networks for jobs has been noted throughout much of sub-Saharan Africa, where "the best way of finding employment- other than scraping a living in petty trade on the streets- is to rely on the economy of obligation or the networks of reciprocity that can be tapped" (Chabal 2009, p. 111). Young men in contemporary sub-Saharan Africa especially rely on patron ties in order to increase their chances of gaining access to jobs or other livelihood opportunities, even as they are the most likely to be cut off from these social assurances when social and economic conditions worsen. As explained by Vigh (2006a, p. 117) in his work with young men in Guinea Bissau:

As resources dwindle young men often bear the brunt of retrenchment, as they are the first to be cut from the economy of affection and obligation as well as from patrimonial structures, since they constitute the outermost points within these systems of unequal exchange.

Yet, as elsewhere, young men continue to rely on patronage support, even as they are disadvantaged by their position of relative weakness because patronage ties offer them their only option for coping and survival.

In his research with displaced Congolese youth in Butembo, North Kivu, Raeymaekers (2011) shows how young people rely on social ties in their search for securing their livelihoods. To ensure that they are able to access job possibilities or land, young people must enter into a social network which in turn allows them access into a family- and kin- based economy. The difficulty of accessing this socially-controlled economy is especially felt by young people who have been displaced to Butembo

⁴⁶ See Bates (2008) for a general discussion on the post-colonial transformation of patronage in sub-Saharan Africa.

by the violence and who thus lack the “stable attachments” (ibid., p. 13 cited Richards and Chauveau 2007) necessary for effectively integrating into local patronage networks. Raeymaekers’ findings are generalizable throughout the DRC, where patronage ties have historically been of fundamental importance. As will be discussed below, patronage relations remain an essential form of social, economic and political support even as they have been transformed over time and in response to the structures of violence.

CONGOLESE PATRONAGE SYSTEMS IN HISTORIC PERSPECTIVE

Throughout modern Congolese history, patronage has been a dominant feature of daily life and public administration. In the pre-colonial era, traditional authority over the control of land was held by *bami* (pl., Kiswahili term for chiefs) who presided over geographical areas which coincided with unified language and identity groups. People would pay regular tribute to their *mwami* (s., Kiswahili term for chief) in exchange for access to land, while supporting a ‘local moral economy’ in which loyalty was offered in exchange for protection (Vlassenroot 2000a). Eventually these traditional patron-based systems of rule became formalised as the ‘Native Authorities’ in which traditional chiefs were largely subsumed within the colonial machinery (Mamdani 2001, see Chapter 2 above).

As explained elsewhere in discussions of colonial governance throughout sub-Saharan Africa, the colonial administration used the existing patronage system to their advantage in order to extract the “maximum resources from the least financial and coercive expenditure” (Chabal 2009, p. 89). While constructing themselves in the “paternal image” (Young 1965, p. 72), the Belgian authorities contributed to the long process of weakening “the powers of the local lineage chiefs over land attribution replacing those by more individual and monetarized transactions” (Prunier 2009, p. 49).⁴⁷

Ascending to power in 1965 in the newly-named Zaire, Mobutu Sese-Seko further entrenched the state use of patronage ties for asserting his control over the country. While consolidating his position as father of the nation, Mobutu also skilfully positioned Zaire as a key Cold War client in a global political economy of patronage. As established in the politics literature, any well-functioning patronage system relies essentially on the flow of material goods (Chabal 2009); Mobutu was able to ensure political loyalty within Zaire by balancing elite interests with the profits of Western munificence that he had amassed in exchange for his Cold War services (Prunier 2009, Marriage 2010). At the national level, Mobutu expertly “converted economic assets into a stock of political resources for (re-) distribution to those who had shown political loyalty” (Vlassenroot and Romkema 2007, p. 9). These political elites in turn used their material gains to manage their own patron-based networks, a system which was replicated down to the most local levels.

A functioning patronage system is not based only on one person but “involves a network of patron-client relationships transcending the entire society” (Vigh 2006a, p. 124).⁴⁸ Examining how elite

⁴⁷ The power differential between colonial administrators and Congolese ‘subjects’ was maintained through the use or threat of violence, placing the majority of the population in a position of relative weakness. As described by Young (1965), colonial administrators considered themselves to be the parents of their Congolese subjects, who they thought of as “big children” (ibid., p. 59) in need of guidance through their stage of “arrested adolescence” (ibid., p. 72).

⁴⁸ Vigh (2006a, p. 124) further draws the link between the strength of patronage ties and ethnic politics: “Part of the resilience of patrimonialism is that, contrary to popular belief, it is not centred on one primary patron but involves a network of patron-client relationships transcending the entire society. As such, ethnicity and patrimonialism strengthen each other, as ethnicity provides ready-made structures for the distribution of resources and invests it with moral obligation.” This point is relevant in the context of the DRC, where identity-based politics remain highly salient, as will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6.

interests within patronage-based systems are balanced, de Waal (2009) introduces the concept of a 'political marketplace', where political loyalty comes at a price, where the successful patron is the one who is able to effectively respond to market prices for loyalty. In this form of 'retail patronage politics', inclusivity is key to ensuring the sustainability of the system. As highlighted by de Waal, Mobutu perfected the balancing act among elites, giving and taking favour in a sufficiently predictable manner to manage elite interests (ibid., p. 13).⁴⁹

Until this late 1980s, Mobutu had been largely able to satisfy elite interests due to the largesse of Western governments as well as with the revenues collected from the extraction of mineral resources (McNulty 1999). By the end of the Cold War, however, Western funding dried up, while decades of misuse and lack of investment in the mining infrastructure left by the Belgians meant that Mobutu's main sources of wealth began to disappear. No longer having the capacity to pay his patron debts, Mobutu thus started to lose control of the patron-client equilibrium he had so carefully maintained (Vlassenroot and Romkema 2007). Consequently, elite interests were able to more freely engage in their own forms of predation, as the army and actors in state institutions increasingly used the authority of their public positions to increase their private gain (Eriksson Baaz and Stern 2010). As the Zairian patron-state began its "retreat from citizens" (Reno 1998, p. 153), agents of the state- from soldiers to civil servants to teachers and other service providers- became familiar with *la débrouille* (MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga 2000, as discussed in Chapter 2 and Chapter 4 above) and thus transformed patronage in ways that were increasingly dysfunctional.

CONTEMPORARY FORMS OF PATRONAGE

While in traditional forms of patronage, material and financial exchanges serve merely as "an expression of respect for the existing social hierarchy" (Vlassenroot 2000a, p. 265), money, materiality and individual advancement became more important in Zaire. Even as the nation's 'father' began a gradual retreat from his citizens (Vlassenroot and Hoebeke 2006, p. 30), the breakdown of Mobutu's patron state did not lead to the collapse of Congolese patronage systems overall. Rather, patronage in Zaire was transformed, adapting both to the increased importance of monetised exchange as well as to higher levels of violence. In terms of monetisation, the Congolese transformation reflected processes which similarly occurred elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa, where the "over-monetarisation of everyday life" (Olivier de Sardan 1999, p. 46) began to take hold. In the early 1990s, the material goods and money formerly bestowed by patrons became even more restricted as a result of shifts in global market prices and the rising cost of food and other goods.⁵⁰ The resulting economic scarcity meant that cash became the essential tool for survival (Stearns 2011), thus shifting the functions of social support previously fulfilled by patronage relations.⁵¹

⁴⁹ De Waal (2009, p. 13) explains how in Zaire "those out of favour [would] focus on how to return to favour under the existing system... It was a cheaper way of maintaining the system and had the advantage that it could prevent those who were in favour from being able to build a durable patronage system of their own, and to that degree it was sustainable."

⁵⁰ According to Prunier (2009, p. 278), while per capita income had been measured at US\$630 in 1980, by the early 1990s "per capita income had fallen so low that it was now hard to measure... between US\$78- \$88."

⁵¹ The shifting nature of Congolese patronage relationships was earlier documented in 1972 by René Lemarchand and Crawford Young in a written correspondence between them which discussed the challenges of understanding clientelist relations in post-independence Zaire "when all is fluidity, when the networks are far more ephemeral, when mutual costs and benefits of maintenance of particular patron-client sets are apparently recalculated very frequently, and on the basis of very short-run contingencies..." (Young, as cited in Lemarchand 1972, p. 69)

As patronage support became less reliable, an “individualistic, acquisitive ‘capitalist lifestyle’” (Reno 1998, p. 158) came to dominate. The legitimacy and primacy of material wealth became necessary not only for the expression of political power, but also within social culture, as the popular prerogative shifted towards one of: “*Devenez Riche Rapidement*” (Reno 1998). Moving away from the traditional norms of family- and kin-based social support where trust has an important regulating role (see Colletta and Cullen 2000), the new social norm which came to dominate Congolese social relations was that “a man is more of a man when he has more wealth” (Reno 1998, p. 158).⁵²

Displays of wealth have become more important in contemporary Congolese life, even as the economic situation has worsened and material resources have become scarcer for the majority of the population. Such adverse conditions have led to a situation where social relations are increasingly commoditised, where individuals help each other with the expectation of something being received in return (Trefon 2004).⁵³ Demonstrating how an individualising market economy and deepening economic adversity have come to dominate contemporary capacities for coping with adversity, Nzeza Bilakila (2004, p. 23) explains how contemporary social support functions in Kinshasa:

Poverty is psychologically transformed into despair solidarity. While the Kinois [people from Kinshasa] are able and willing to extend psychological support, financial and material constraints limit this solidarity to a pragmatic system of exchange. People help each other primarily if they expect something in return. Debt, whether it be in the form of a loan, a service rendered or a favour, will ultimately have to be redeemed.

Poverty has clearly had a transformative role on social support throughout the DRC, and social coping capacities have been further weakened by political violence.⁵⁴ Although violence- or at least its threat - is implicit in the patronage equilibrium as it preserves relations of power, violence has become increasingly dominant in defining social relations in the DRC. Violence in the DRC has long served as “the most important instrument for affirming personal interests and those of [one’s] own community” (Vlassenroot and Hoebeke 2006, p. 12, see also Young 1965, Hochschild 1998, Willame 1997, Reno 1998), but it has increasingly become a defining component of contemporary social, economic and political relations. In the Kivus, extortion, repression and predation have come to replace the social controls of reciprocity. Although extortion and predation were also present in the Mobutu era, “the difference between the current situation and the historical patterns of patrimonialism is the systematic use of violence...” (Vlassenroot and Romkema 2007, p. 19).

⁵² As seen in other contexts, the seemingly modern expression of patronage in its monetised form also has its roots in the past. Olivier de Sardan (1999, p. 43) notes that: “the factors originating in the pre-colonial culture of ostentation are of some importance... the pre-colonial chief was obliged to show largesse to all, and thus to allow for public praise of his generosity. Here the capacity to redistribute was of course founded on patrimonialism, which regulated traditional power.”

⁵³ This expectation of reciprocity is generalizable; in the social capital literature, Putnam et al. (1993, p. 182- 183) explain that relationships of collaboration and social support are strengthened by the knowledge that: “I’ll do this for you now, knowing that somewhere down the road you’ll do something for me.”

⁵⁴ The negative impact of the global economic situation has been felt throughout much of sub-Saharan Africa, where “there has been a trend towards the monetization of patronage systems, and that this has contributed to the growth of deregulated, regionally-integrated and violent political marketplaces” (de Waal 2009, p. 15). De Waal (ibid., p. 14) also explains how the use of violence by elites is a key skill in balancing patronage ties: “One of the skills of managing a sustainable patronage system is trying to manage the use of violence for bargaining purposes. One element of this is ensuring that the security institutions of the state do not get too powerful, because that would risk a coup d’état. So the strategy is to multiply and divide: establish multiple security services, each as specialized patronage networks, thereby dividing the threat to the ruler from his own security officers.”

Although in patron-based systems authority generally “implies a position of trust, competence and wisdom that confers upon those who are endowed with it the force of persuasion, rather than coercion” (Chabal 2009, p. 40), in the Kivus violence and coercion have broken down expectations of trust between patrons and clients. Demonstrating what Vigh (2006a, p. 48) has elsewhere termed ‘militarised patrimonialism’, patronage ties in the highly militarised environment of the Kivus cannot be disaggregated from the prevailing dynamics of violence.

As described above, social support capacities have been highly strained by the increasing material difficulties faced by the majority of the Congolese population, a strain which has been compounded by decades of violence, consequent distrust between people, and general uncertainty about future survival options. Although the traditional patron-client dyad no longer holds in which dependence and loyalty are reciprocated with munificence and protection, the patron figure remains a powerful social force in contemporary DRC. Today, patrons are identified as those in positions of power, such as administrators or government authorities, or anyone who is able to control or gain access to material resources. Such access to resources is essential in the establishment and maintenance of the image of the Big Man, a figure who has received attention in the literature relating to contemporary state governance in Africa (Utas 2012 cited Sahlins 1963 and Godelier 1986):

The Big Man has the ability to command, to instigate mass action, where authority is not structurally ascribed and socio-historically motivated but based on the Big Man’s ability to create a following and to a large extent dependent on his informal abilities to assist people privately... Building renown and power is based on amassing wealth and redistributing it with ‘astutely calculated generosity’ (Godelier 1986, p. 163, cited in Utas 2012, p. 6).

Although much is written about the Big Man in Africa, much less has been documented from the perspective of the client who is dependent on the assistance and generosity of the patron. Yet the way in which clients search for a patron offers great insights on how the “absence of resources and opportunities” (Chabal 2009, p. 11) can lead individuals without power to engage in ‘strategies of the weak’ (Scott 1972, de Certeau 1984). In this sense the way in which young people navigate the structures of violence offers new perspectives on how they try to cope with a lack of material resources by tactically using their position of weakness in their attempt to enter patron-client relationships.

The examples detailed below discuss the role of the Congolese Big Man, the mechanisms through which young people attempt to access patronage relationships, and the way in which patronage ties can also be accessed in a militarised context. In ways that reflect how individual coping tactics interact with the social support available within the structures of violence, the following examples show how people with few alternative options for social support are left investing in positions of weakness and inequality in order to ensure their own short-term survival. It is seen how the reliance on patronage relationships can also contribute to reinforcing young people’s positions of weakness, even as they may help to support coping in the short term.

The use of weakness as a tactical coping mechanism was demonstrated to me during my fieldwork by Mr. K, a driver who, unlike most others, was willing to take me to and from my fieldwork site in Bunyakiri during a relatively tense period of military operations in 2010. During our road trips between Bukavu and Bunyakiri, Mr. K- would usually exhaust me with his endless stream of

demands for a job for him, for his brother and for his wife, and also, if possible, for some money to pay his children's school fees as well as their unpaid medical bills. Usually I would listen to his constant barrage of requests for help as patiently as I could, and then would try to deflect his requests by offering possible alternative topics for discussion. The following extract from my fieldwork diary illustrates the nature of our exchanges and offers an example of how weakness is used as a tactic in efforts to gain access to support:

Mr K-'s driving was more erratic today than usual, and I wondered how many beers he'd drunk while I'd been with the kids. He began his job-money-help tirade as soon as we started our drive back, and was even more insistent. Despite my best efforts at distraction and avoidance, he repeated his now firmly established truth that I had completely failed in my promise to find him a real job so that, at last, he could properly take care of his family. Eventually the conversation strayed, and for a while we settled into a comfortable silence.

As we neared the end of our trip and entered the early evening traffic in Bukavu, K- spotted a red Pajero in front of us. Dodging the deep holes of the Bukavu streets, the weaving motorbikes, and the erratically crossing children, K- pushed heavily down on the accelerator and began to urgently and repetitively sound the car horn. Excitedly he turned to me: "That's my *Député*" [a Provincial Assembly Representative]. There he is! He's the one we elected from our area!"

In the most determined driving I'd yet experienced with him, K- managed to draw even with the Pajero at the next intersection. He reached over me, rolled down my window and- as I shrank back in my seat as far as I possibly could- extended his body over mine and reached his arm out the passenger window towards the Representative's car, now blocked from moving forward by our car.

"*Député! Député! Bonjour!*" I sat back to witness K-'s outpouring of verbal prostrations. The Representative's face could have masked any number of shifting feelings, but within a couple of seconds settled into a smile. The elaborate and extended verbal exchange which proceeded over me included several requests from K- for "a small thing" a "Fanta..." and on it went. Eventually, the Representative reached into his shirt pocket and pulled out 500Fc [US\$0.5] which he extended out his window into K-'s open hand. Our drive home could at last continue.

I was amazed. "K-... really? Did you really just beg your Representative for 500Fc?" In my ensuing barrage of questions I tried to make sense of his overt display of weakness and what was for me a projection of self-disrespect. I wanted to understand how he could beg so blatantly for such a small amount of money, especially as I was paying him more than US\$100 for that day of work alone.

"No, no, Claudia, it's not like that at all. You must understand. He is our *Député*. He expects me to beg from him. If I didn't it would be as if I was insulting him, as if I didn't consider him to be an important person."

That I understood: make the Big Man feel big. But K- continued with his explanation, offering an analysis which I had not considered before and which reflected his skilful manipulation of available opportunities and his longer-term perspectives on survival: "Because I ask him for help, he understands that I depend on him. Today 500 Fc means nothing. We both know that. But one day in the future I may really need him. Because he

has helped me today, he has accepted the role of being my patron. Tomorrow, if one of my children is ill, or we have another kind of emergency at home, I will go to him. Because he has already accepted his role as my father today, he will feel responsible for giving the money I need then.

While I initially considered Mr. K- to be expressing the 'dependence complex' long critiqued in sub-Saharan Africa (Mannoni 1950), I eventually realised that through his "voluntary, free, deliberate" positioning of vulnerability (see Bourdieu 2000, p. 170), he was engaging in a much more complex and nuanced dynamic of power and weakness. No longer simply a story about Big Men exuding power over the poor (Lemarchand 1972), through Mr. K-'s explanation I could now understand the self-projection of weakness and dependence as a sophisticated tactic within longer-term social coping processes (de Certeau 1984, Marriage 2012a).

Engaging in patronage relations requires careful balancing of portrayal with perception, exemplifying a daily theatre which can be considered from a sociological perspective. As Erving Goffman (1959, p. 1) explains in the *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*:

When an individual enters the presence of others, they commonly seek to acquire information about him or to bring into play information about him already possessed. They will be interested in his general socio-economic status, his conception of self, his attitude toward them, his competence, his trustworthiness, etc. Although some of this information seems to be sought almost as an end in itself, there are usually quite practical reasons for acquiring it. Information about the individual helps to define the situation, enabling others to know in advance what he will expect of them and what they may expect of him. Informed in these ways, the others will know how best to act in order to call forth a desired response from him.

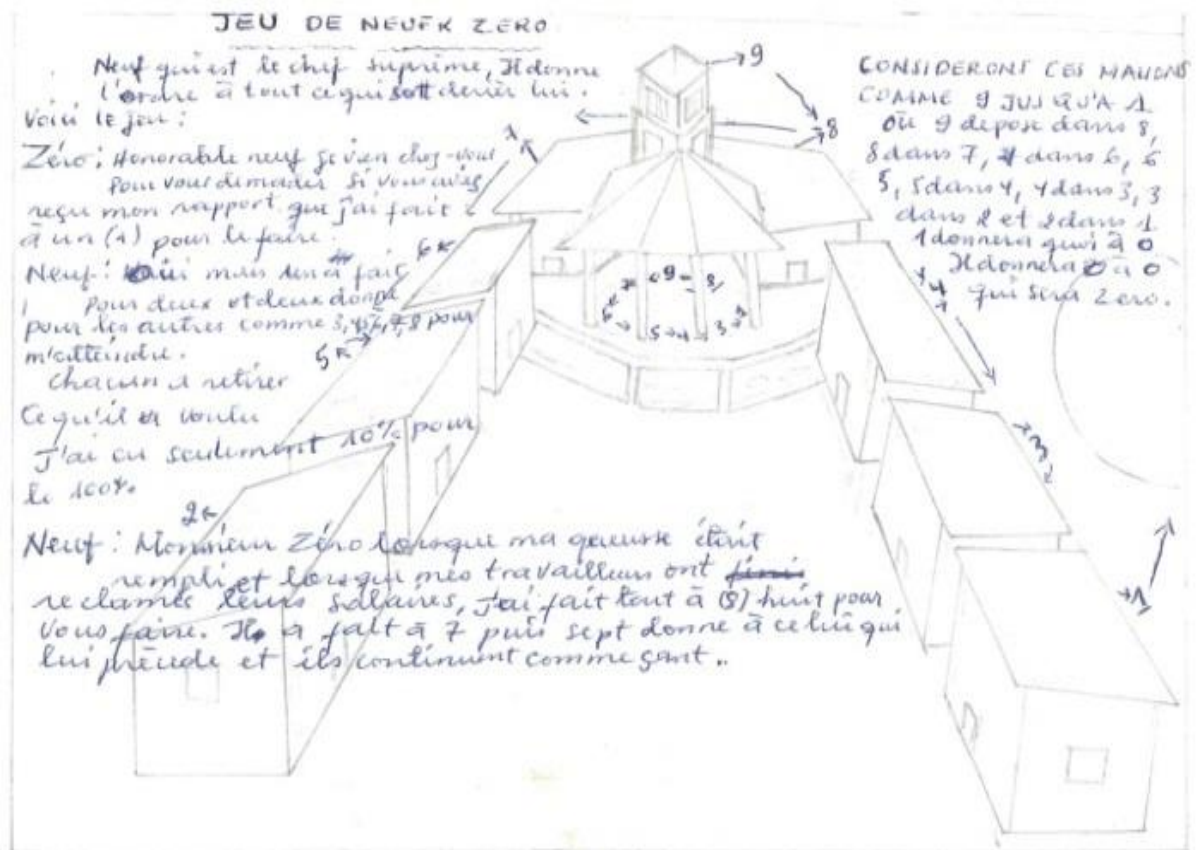
In the system of patronage which dominates everyday life in the Kivus, the reliance on weakness and subordination by individuals, including young people, aims to increase access to material benefits and protection. Yet, as shown in the case of Mr. K-, the amount of material support which may be offered by the patron may be insignificant in the face of the limited opportunities and extreme demands imposed by the conditions of poverty and structural violence. Although Mr. K- was hopeful that in the future his Representative would be able to help him should he ever find himself in a position of desperate need, it is not certain that such assistance would be forthcoming. In the DRC, the needs of the vast majority of the population are so great- and daily survival is so precarious- that no patron, despite having the best of intentions, would be able to meet the expectations placed upon him by all of those seeking his help.⁵⁵ The inability of today's patrons to satisfy the growing material needs of those in positions of comparative weakness means that patronage ties are a less dependable form of social support. Yet, contrary to what might be expected, the lack of dependability of patronage ties in the DRC does not render them obsolete. Rather, people have become even more desperate to gain access to the now scarcer material resources which are

⁵⁵ Although this point will not be treated in depth in this thesis, it is interesting to note that potential clients also have the tools of shame and social morality to draw upon when trying to gain access to patron support. As advanced by Olivier de Sardan (1999) in his analysis of corruption in sub-Saharan Africa: "Shame is a social morality, a morality based on other people's opinions, rather than one based on an individual examination of conscience... shame, which is fundamentally situational, plays upon another register, that of the pressure of the family circle and its networks, that of 'what will people say', this register favours rather than impedes the practices of the corruption complex" (ibid., p. 46- 47). Given the difficulty in gaining access to resources by the majority of the Congolese population, even shame is losing its power of social regulation.

distributed among a smaller number of people. This point was highlighted through a metaphorical game described to me during a discussion with my research participants in Bunyakiri in June 2010. This 'Game of Nine to Zero' was drawn by Vainquer to accompany their explanation:

Figure 6: The Game of Nine to Zero

Drawing by Vainquer, Bunyakiri, August 2010.



The Game of Nine to Zero

Nine is the supreme chief, he gives the orders to all beneath him. This is the game:

Zero: Honourable Nine, I have come to you to ask you if you received [the payment] that I gave to One.

Nine: Yes, but One has given it to Two and Two has given it to the others (3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8) before reaching me. Each one has taken what they've needed. I have received only 10% of the 100%.

Nine: Mr. Zero, when my account was full and when my workers claimed their pay, I gave everything to Eight so that he would distribute it to you. He gave it to Seven then Seven gave it to the next one and it has continued in this way.

Considering these as houses from 9 to 1, where 9 gives to 8, 8 to 7, 7 to 6, 6 to 5, 5 to 4, 4 to 3, 3 to 2, 2 to 1, then what will 1 give to 0? He'll give 0 to 0 who will remain Zero.

The social system represented by this metaphor is one in which there are limited resources available for distribution among a restricted number of actors. According to my research participants, they and the majority of the Congolese population are represented by Zero: “Zero is left with zero”. The restricted circle of patronage distribution within the fortunate court of “Nine to One” means that all of those who live outside of this confined system are not able to participate in the mutually beneficial exchange of reciprocity and obligation. My young research participants were aware of the inherent injustice and inequality of this system, yet the sense of dejection in their accounts was less about the system itself, and more about the unlikelihood that they would ever be able to gain access to it. For them, entering the Court of Nine to One represented the only possibility of eventually gaining access to resources or jobs or other forms of protection which they require. In this way, buying into a social system of exclusion, inequality and weakness often represented to my research participants their only chance for improving their short-term survival prospects. Many of their coping tactics were therefore directed on trying to position themselves as a client to potential patrons, emphasising their weakness with the hope that they might be able to access the needed resources which would aid in their daily coping efforts.

As introduced in Chapter 2, this tactical reliance on weakness relates to the third dominant coping mechanism used by young people in the Kivus to navigate within the structures of violence: victimhood. Victimhood involves young people portraying themselves as weak and vulnerable in order to increase their chances of being assisted. From this perspective, portrayals of weakness are considered to be helpful in the effort to gain access to patronage. Such portrayals featured regularly during my fieldwork period as my research participants remained aware of my position of relative power and thus of my potential to eventually serve as their patron. This was especially noticeable among some of my research participants in the aid-saturated context of Bukavu, where many of our early casual discussions would include references to money and its scarcity. One day I asked them: “Do you always talk about money, or is it just because I’m here with you?” Their response was forthright: “We probably talk about it more when you’re here. When you’re not, we know none of us has any so we don’t even bother mentioning it” (informal discussion, Bukavu, April 2010).

With time, I was able to move beyond overt expectations of patronage with most of my research participants as they came to realise that I really did not have the means they expected all Europeans to have. As we developed relationships that became more substantive, eventually their mention of money and material needs subsided. However, a few of them- especially those who became more deeply involved as key research participants over the months- were investing in a relationship with me for the longer term, a relationship which they hoped might eventually lead to some greater benefit. One of my research participants, B-, remained persistent in his requests for my patronage. He tried multiple tactics, initially during our conversations and eventually in writing:

Dear Madame Claudia

... At the age of 10, I lost one of my parents. I became an orphan of my father. From that age survival became very difficult. The death left the whole family in a situation of extreme hardship. My mother suffers an illness of her stomach and hypertension...

The five children in the family came under my charge when I was 10 years old, when I was still in the second year of primary school. At that age I began to pay my school fees and the

school fees for my younger siblings. I would look for small jobs, transporting rocks or collecting sand to sell so that I could find the money to pay for all of us.

Today I am 23 years old and I'm trying by all means possible to find the money to be able to finish my secondary school diploma.... But the responsibilities I am faced with are so great, and they are multiplying. I don't know how we will manage anymore.

I ask for your help in finding a small job. Any job that would allow me to continue studying...

I pray that you will receive this with my civic and patriotic feelings... and pledge that this information is sincere.

It's B-

This letter contains all of the elements which I had come to expect in the many letters I had received in my years living in sub-Saharan Africa. Although there would be individual variations in such requests for my patronage, in almost all of these written narratives there would be the death of a parent, an illness, helpless children needing care, school fees needing to be paid, an expression of willingness to work, and- the motivation for the writing of the letter itself- a desperate moment when survival itself was in question. They were crafted in a way that aimed to appeal to my own sense of morality, projecting an obligation which, over the years and unfortunately for B-, I had become less susceptible to accepting.

During my review of the patronage literature, I was surprised to discover that this formulaic patron-request letter is not only a tool used by young people in conflict-affected sub-Saharan Africa, but has also served as a tool throughout modern history in highly divergent contexts. In his historic analysis of thousands of letters written by individuals in Florence in the fifteenth century, McLean (2005, 2007) demonstrates how the patron letter was a tool that was frequently deployed by individuals in positions of relative weakness who sought favours from those in positions of power. The letters analysed by McLean (2005, p. 640) send the "mixed signals... typical of patronage interaction, mingling expressions of deference with claims to desert" while proclaiming in desperation that "I have no other recourse but to you" (ibid, p. 650).

This unexpected similarity in tactics used to gain patron support allows for further reflection on how individuals use their positions within society to support their own coping mechanisms and how these mechanisms feedback to reinforce people's positions of weakness. In both contemporary South Kivu and Renaissance Florence, the tactics which are employed by individuals are determined by the structures in which they live. By tracing the patron-request letters over time, McLean shows how the requests contained in the patron letters adapted and shifted during phases of war-making and tax-collecting, becoming part of the complex processes of state formation. The letters exemplified

the widespread Florentine strategy of relying on personal relationships *both* as a defense against the demands of the state *and* as a means of remaining an active member of it. Florentine citizens were not merely subjects or "victims" of the state, but also its custodians... (ibid., p. 639)

Similarly, the way in which young people continue to engage with contemporary patronage systems in the Kivus despite their general lack of benefit reflects how they become the custodians of an unequal and dysfunctional system. According to my research participants, the possibility of a

brighter future could only be envisioned after meeting the prerequisite of finding “someone who will take care of you” (focus group discussion, Bukavu, April 2010). The patron featured prominently in any success story, and any narratives of successful coping involved mention of how someone had helped them to find a job or to pay their school fees. Without a patron, it was impossible for young people to imagine another way out of their difficult life situation. The aspirations of a 20-year-old man in Bukavu were echoed by many: “I dream of someone taking me out of this situation” (interview, Bukavu, April 2010). Young people often perceived that their daily conditions- for better or for worse- depended on others; while their active search for a patron represents a key coping tactic for young people, the dependence on a patron figure also represents how responsibility is deflected from themselves towards those in positions of greater power.

The ways in which patronage ties have been affected by militarised violence in the Kivus was also evident during my fieldwork. In highly militarised environments, young people often look for patronage support in the armed groups themselves, where physical protection is more likely and access to material resources more assured. This was also demonstrated by Vigh (2006a) in his research in Guinea Bissau, where conditions of entrenched structural poverty had led young men to join armed groups in the hope of gaining access to patron-based sponsorship. A similar dynamic has been seen during the various iterations of militarised violence in eastern DRC, especially during the 1996- 2003 wars when young Congolese “gladly turned to soldiering” in their efforts to cope with the conditions of “humiliating grinding poverty” (Prunier 2009, p. 164).

Another example of contemporary patronage discussed in this chapter was presented to me while I was working as a Child Protection Advisor with the UN peacekeeping mission in North Kivu between 2006 and 2007. In this capacity, one of my primary tasks was to monitor the use of children by armed groups, to negotiate their release, and to denounce their commanders in order to encourage the end of child recruitment. Recruitment efforts were underway throughout North Kivu on all sides, including of young people under the age of 18 years. It was also at the time when the International Criminal Court in The Hague was beginning its pre-trial hearings against Thomas Lubanga Dyilo, the Congolese militia commander who would eventually be charged with crimes against humanity, specifically for enlisting and conscripting children under the age of 15 years (International Criminal Court 2012b, see also Clark 2008b).

Following a temporary peace deal negotiated at the beginning of 2007, CNDP troops were to be integrated into the FARDC through a process termed *mixage*, which was, in effect, an army identification and registration exercise. My task with the UN was to be present at the *mixage* sites and to oversee the identification and eventual separation of children from the military. In April 2007, one of the *mixage* operations took place in the town of Kitchanga, Masisi Territory, a key zone of control for the CNDP. On arriving in Kitchanga, my colleague and I arranged a meeting with the colonel responsible for the area- part of our standard activities of targeted advocacy. The colonel told us to find him at the end of the afternoon in the house where he was then based.

As we drove to meet him, it began to rain heavily, quickly making the main road impassable. Searching for an alternative route, we asked a young man on the street for directions; he knew the way and willingly offered to guide us. Climbing into the back seat of our car, he engaged in a lively discussion with us. Speaking in perfect French, he pointed out his house as we passed it and then his school. At 18 years of age, he was soon to begin his last year of secondary school. This accordance

between his age and the appropriate school year was a rare occurrence in the Kivus, where most young people's course of schooling had been disrupted by the conflict, repeated experiences of displacement and most families' inability to pay their children's school fees. Surprised, I asked him how he had managed to reach such a high level of studies at his age. His response was not at all what I had expected: "The General pays my school fees." "The General?" I asked incredulously, knowing exactly who he meant. "Yes," he replied. "The General. He pays all our fees. It's thanks to him that we study."

The General was Laurent Nkunda, the commander of the CNDP who was renowned- or notorious- for his military skills and ideological positioning in fighting for the Tutsi population. He had served with the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) in their advance against the *Forces Armées Rwandaises* in Rwanda in the lead-up and response to the Rwandan genocide, and was a key military leader in the *Armée Nationale Congolaise* (ANC) during the RCD period (Scott 2008). He was also accused by the international community of war crimes, in particular for the forced recruitment of children to his ranks. At the time, he was considered to be the nemesis of the UN and international human rights regime and was blamed for causing the instability in the Kivus.⁵⁶

Prior to meeting this young man, I had only ever heard of the egregious human rights violations perpetrated by Laurent Nkunda. Yet here was a young man describing "The General" as a father figure, as his patron and his protector. This young man would serve as a body guard or an assistant to the higher commands of the CNDP during his school vacations, or when he was otherwise needed as a reserve soldier, but usually he lived at home and was continuing with his schooling. Compared to the hundreds of other children I had separated from the various armed groups that year- many of whom were languishing in the various interim care centres in Goma without many prospects for a remarkably improved future- this young man seemed to be faring comparatively well indeed. As seen in other conflict-affected contexts (Annan et al. 2006, McEvoy-Levy 2006), young people often voluntarily join armed groups for rational reasons, including to ensure their own protection, a theme which will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 7. The young man who I met in Kitchanga was eager to serve with the CNDP and by tactically submitting himself to the military, he was in turn offered protection and was able to advance with his studies. For him, militarised patronage offered him the best possible options for protection and advancement at a time of violent conflict.

Patronage in the DRC has long been a dominant feature of daily life and an essential aspect of social coping processes. The examples described above demonstrate how Congolese patronage remains a dominant form of social support, even as it has been significantly transformed by the structures of violence.

SOCIAL SUPPORT CONSERVING VIOLENCE AND WEAKENING COPING CAPACITIES

The structures of violence which dominate in the Kivus have had a direct bearing on the social support available to young people. As demonstrated in the first section of this chapter, parents want to provide their children with adequate support, but the constraints of poverty and lack of material resources are in many ways preventing them from doing so. The inability of parents to meet their

⁵⁶ In January 2009, Laurent Nkunda was arrested in Bunagana, Rutshuru Territory on the border with Rwanda, and then placed under house arrest in Kigali where he remains at the time of this writing.

children's material needs has led to a loss of parental authority; young people are left to fend for themselves in order to satisfy their own needs, adapting their coping mechanisms in order to best survive the structures of violence. Going beyond the psychological perspectives offered by resilience theory, the second section of this chapter has integrated a social, economic and political analysis of patronage relationships in order to demonstrate how the patronage system in contemporary DRC plays a fundamental role in young people's coping processes.

As seen above, my research participants would emphasise their position of victimhood to prospective patrons in the hopes that they might be able to gain access to resources which would help them in their daily coping efforts. In the patronage-based system operating in the Kivus, the portrayal of one's own weakness is a carefully nuanced act. In order to be successful in projecting themselves in such a way that can benefit from the norms of patronage, young people need to be sufficiently sensitive to imbalances in power and access to resources within their environments. As narrated by my research participants, young people are sometimes successful in gaining entry to a patron-client relationship and can consequently receive the desired material support to pay their school or medical fees or be given an opportunity to work, but in most cases their efforts to find a patron are unsuccessful.

Given the increasing needs of a majority of the population living in adverse conditions in the Kivus, there are just too many clients who are in need of support to keep the patronage system functioning in a beneficial way for young people. Yet young people's lack of success in finding a patron does not stop them from continuing to invest in this exploitative system. Buying into a social system of exclusion and inequality usually represents their only chance for improving their short-term survival prospects. The reduced opportunities for young people to rely on social support have been similarly examined by Vigh (2006a), where he shows how the breakdown of the economy and the effects of poverty have reduced the 'tactical possibilities' for surviving within a patron-based economy; in such conditions, young people are "experiencing a continuous deterioration of their social possibilities... and becoming increasingly exploited" (ibid., p. 136).

As was described by my research participants in Bunyakiri, their only hope of finding a job or receiving the help they need is try to enter the 'Court of Nine to One', even if by attempting to enter it young people reinforce their position of weakness and dependence. Although young people are tactically choosing to portray themselves as weak as a way to increase their opportunities in facing the challenges of everyday survival, by doing so they are also reinforcing patterns of dependence, weakness and inequality. By choosing weakness, young people run the risk of becoming "what they pretend to be" (Lefcourt 1976, p. 19). In this way it is possible to see how the "chronic, historically-entrenched political-economic oppression and social inequality" (Bourgois 2001, p. 8, as cited in Chapter 1) inherent in structural violence is reproduced. Certainly young people in the Kivus cannot be held responsible for the structures of violence in which they live and the lack of social support available to them, yet it is evident that their tactical engagement with these structures also contributes to their continued entrenchment in conditions of poverty and their own lack of personal advancement.

The entrenched poverty and continuing violence offer bleak prospects for the future of social support available to young people in the Kivus. This bleakness was clearly articulated by my research

participants who explained how scarcity and competition had long ago destroyed possibilities for social solidarity:

There is no love between Congolese people; once someone has something, the first thought we have is how to get it from them. (focus group discussion, Bukavu, April 2010)

This sentiment was echoed by another young man who explained that “life is difficult here because there is so much jealousy between people. It’s because of competition between us that we can’t advance” (interview, Mushinga, April 2010).

Long subjected by the structures of violence, most young people in the Kivus are at the worst end of what Goodhand et al. (2000, p. 402) have otherwise explained as the natural “processes of exclusion and inclusion” which are engendered by violence. Although in some cases violence has been considered to be transformative- “less about social breakdown than the creation of new forms of political economic relations at local, national and international levels” (ibid., p. 392 cited Duffield 2000 and Keen 2000)- in the Kivus the structures of violence are only reinforcing the breakdown of social support, leaving little in the way of options to effectively support young people’s coping processes.

CHAPTER 6: VIOLENCE AND THE ATTRIBUTION OF MEANING

This chapter explores how processes of meaning attribution relate to young people's experiences of violence in the Kivus. Drawing on the interdisciplinary literature on meanings of violence, it begins by elaborating a meaning attribution framework to support the chapter's subsequent analysis of meanings attributed to violence. It examines in depth the role of identity-based, victim-perpetrator discourses and the ways in which shame and humiliation relate to brutal violence, and how, in turn, meanings attributed to violence relate to young people's coping processes. In contrast, it also considers how not attributing meaning to violence- as relates to the use of violence to suppress dissent- has a negative impact on coping processes. Finally, it concludes by emphasising how processes of meaning attribution within the structures of violence can contribute to reinforcing the structures of violence, thus serving to exemplify Bourdieu's (2000) 'law of conservation of violence'.

MEANINGS OF VIOLENCE FRAMEWORK

To examine the extremely complex processes through which meaning is attributed to violence in the Kivus, an interdisciplinary framework is elaborated in this section, drawing primarily on the anthropological literature on the meanings of violence, but also on sociology, politics and history. This framework considers four key elements: the formation of a habitus of violence- i.e. how violence is integrated into ways of perceiving, thinking and acting; the 'poetics' of violence and the roles of victim-perpetrator discourses; social memory; and narratives. This meaning-attribution framework will be used later in the chapter to support the analysis of how the attribution of meaning relates to young people's processes of coping, and how meanings can serve a psychologically protective function at the same time that they contribute to the conservation of violence.

This meaning attribution framework begins with the application of Bourdieu's notion of habitus- or "the schemes of perception, thought, and action" (Bourdieu 1989, p. 14 as cited in Chapter 1 above) which produce practices and the means of perceiving and appreciating these practices. Such a 'habitus of violence' is a key aspect of how young people perceive and make sense of their experiences of violence. It provides individuals with the framework for understanding events of suffering and loss which may otherwise be difficult to comprehend. This habitus helps to shape not only their perceptions, but also their reactions and responses.

How a habitus of violence becomes integrated into young people's experiences is documented in studies which explore young people's experience of war and protracted political crises (Richards 1996, Utas 2003, West 2004, Christiansen et al. 2006, Vigh 2008, Hart 2008), where young people come to experience "disorder and ruin... as the natural order of things" (Vigh 2008, p. 10 cited Merleau-Ponty 1964, p. 23) and where knowledge systems are shaped by uncertainty and volatility. In his research among young Palestinians living in refugee camps in Jordan, Hart (2008, p. 287) demonstrates how young people interpret the "asymmetrical relations of power" and how the associated adversities and humiliations of living in a refugee camp have been incorporated into new standards of normality. The habitus of violence remains even after war has formally ended; as shown by West (2004, p. 124) in his ethnography in Mozambique, young women "were less

traumatised by their wartime experience than they were by the post-war unravelling of the narrative that had made sense of that experience of that time.”

The second aspect of the meaning-attribution framework is ‘poetics’ and victim-perpetrator discourses. In anthropology, the notion of the ‘poetics’ of violence (Riches 1986, Whitehead 2004), highlights the necessarily subjective and symbolic ways in which meaning is attributed to or derived from violence. From this perspective, interpretations of violence require locally-derived knowledge which is social, cultural and historical (Finnstrom 2005). The concept of poetics of violence requires shared understandings (Riches 1986), yet accepts that the attribution of meaning is neither fixed nor objective. As symbolised by the ‘triangle of violence’ elaborated by Riches, experiences of violence will depend on whether one is a victim, perpetrator or witness to a violent event, even as such subjective ascriptions are usually in a state of constant flux. Taking Riches’ triangle of violence one step further, Leopold (2005) describes how a young girl who is abducted by the Lord’s Resistance Army in northern Uganda is forced to kill her family then repeatedly raped, thus showing how an individual may be simultaneously a victim, a perpetrator, and a witness according to the poetics of violence.

Key to the notion of poetics is ambiguity, a theme which dominates anthropological inquiries into experiences of war. Whitehead (2004, p. 15) provides an example of the shifting and uncertain geography of conflict terrains, where: “violent scripts are uncertain and ambiguous, subject to the poesis of individual actors- a roadblock passed without trouble in the morning may become the scene of killing in the afternoon.” Documenting her research in Sarajevo during the Balkan wars, Maček (2005, p. 71) describes the ambivalence of moral positioning in experiences of violence, demonstrating how “categories of ‘us’ and ‘them’ were blurred... the aims and causes of the war were not clear any more, the justification of the killing and destruction was not convincing and consequently also the judgements of right and wrong were difficult and ambiguous.”

Such ambiguity tends to be effaced in victim-perpetrator discourses which are often associated with political violence (Kleinman 1995). The ascription of blame and claims of victimhood vary according to one’s historical and social position and according to which ‘regimes of truth’ one chooses (Malkki 1995). Victim-perpetrator discourses manifest perceptions of threat, fear, or competition for limited resources and require an ‘other’ who can be blamed for misfortune and adversity. Frequently, the process of ‘othering’ becomes embedded in contentious, identity-based politics, as seen in contexts as diverse as the Balkans (Woodward 2000), India (Das 2007) or Rwanda (Pottier 2002). Identity-based hate discourses in contexts of political violence often exemplify how ‘predatory identities’ can “arise in those circumstances in which majorities and minorities can plausibly be seen as being in danger of trading places” (Appadurai 2006, p. 52). As will be discussed below, victim-perpetrator discourses are a central aspect of young people’s processes of meaning attribution in the Kivus.

The third aspect of the meaning-attribution framework is social memory, a key element in the construction of meanings as well as in the perpetuation of political violence (Malkki 1995). Often, victim-perpetrator discourses look to historical accounts of injustice to justify or legitimise present violence (Malkki 1995). As social memories are selected and evolve, they become

institutionalized and transmitted across generations. These memories in turn contribute to conflict’s intractability, resulting in a self-perpetuating negative cycle. Ultimately such social

memories fill determinative roles in the formation of 'cultures of violence'. (Cairns and Roe 2003, p. 7)

Usually in such contexts, "suffering and traumatic memories are part of a socially distributed reality" (Veale 2005, p. 261). Recalling Bourdieu's (2000) 'law of conservation of violence', social memories are an essential conduit for the transmission of political violence across generations (Cairns and Roe 2003). As the present appropriates the past, processes by which violence is remembered subsequently influence how violence may be transmitted or transformed in the future (Jackson 2005). Analyses of inter-generational transmission of memories show how violence can become "perpetuated by factors quite different from those that caused its emergence" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992, p. 61). Social memories thus become incorporated into the habitus of violence, further reinforcing the iterative dynamics and processes of political conflict (Bar-Tal 2003).

The fourth and final aspect in the meaning-attribution framework elaborated in this thesis is the role of narratives, which play a key role in the transmission of social memory and the conservation of violence. Narratives are defined in the politics literature as "the ways in which we construct disparate facts in our own worlds and weave them together cognitively in order to make sense of our reality" (Patterson and Renwick Monroe 1998, p. 315). They are stories which people create and share to help make sense of their lives and the complexity of their lived experience. Narratives shape perceptions of the world and orient how individuals act in their environment (Autesserre 2012). Narratives can be helpful for understanding how violence is interpreted, remembered and reproduced within political, ideological, economic and social processes (Sayigh 1998). Often such interpretations can evolve into a collective, 'monolithic' (Gluck 2007) narrative that assumes its own life. In situations where individuals exercise little strategic control (de Certeau 1984, Marriage 2012a) narratives may serve as a mechanism for taking 'authorship' of stories which are otherwise politically dictated (Das and Kleinman 2000, p. 12).⁵⁷

As demonstrated in historical research on how war is remembered and retold, memories of past violence are often used "to lay claim to the future" (Gluck 2007, p. 47). In this way, the past is put to pragmatic use (Jackson 2005), even as original meanings get "lost in public narratives" (Macmillan 2009, p. 42 cited Elshtain 1998). As narratives of violence are transferred across generations, violence often becomes "perpetuated by factors quite different from those that caused its emergence" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992, p. 61). Narratives of war provide an example of how history and social memory can be transferred to the present, and show how

the past is not imposed upon the present, but offers itself up, so to speak, to the living as a basis for creatively comprehending their present situation and making informed *choices* about how it is to be addressed and lived. (Jackson 2005, p. 357- 358)

As events of war are narrated, transmitted and transformed across generations, the 'memoryscape' of war becomes a highly charged political space. Social memories are highly malleable, and thus

⁵⁷ The reliance on narratives has been critiqued by some researchers who consider that a 'multiplicity of narratives' will always exist, thus limiting any objective truth (Bloch 1998; see also Chapter 3 above for a discussion on the challenges of verifying narrative-based data). Bloch questions the reliability of narratives, as that which is retold is not necessarily the same as that which is remembered, a factor which can limit the credibility of narratives as a main source of research data. Caution is also needed when working with narratives in contexts of protracted violence, as victims' subjectivity will usually dominate the discourse, simplifying the world into 'victims and villains' while excluding complexity and silencing the diversity of perspectives (Gluck 2007, p. 50).

transcriptions of particular events may be selectively remembered (Cole 2001) or edited, while the concept of ‘purposive memory’- i.e. when events, places or things are remembered for a specific reason (Mistry et al. 2001, p. 29)- can be used for political expediency, as seen in the official commemoration ceremonies of World War II in Japan (Gluck 2007) or in annual commemorations of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda.

MEANINGS OF VIOLENCE IN THE KIVUS

The meaning attribution framework outlined above is useful in trying to make sense of the incredibly complex processes of how individuals interpret and make sense of violence in the Kivus. The expressions of meaning examined in this section are: first, identity-based, victim-perpetrator discourses; and second, shame and humiliation. Both of these expressions of meaning are evident in the violent politics which prevail in the Kivus, and demonstrate how the processes of meaning attribution can be both psychologically and politically helpful. As will be seen, at the individual level, they help young people cope with violence by providing a sense of coherence and predictability. At the political level, these meaning attribution processes facilitate the deflection of public attention away from the lack of effective governance on the part of Congolese leaders, and in this way contribute to the conservation of violence.

IDENTITY-BASED, VICTIM-PERPETRATOR DISCOURSES

At the individual level, my research participants clearly demonstrated how victimhood and identity-based, victim-perpetrator discourses are a central aspect of their meaning system. Their internalisation of victimhood relies on ascribing blame on an identifiable other, and is central to how they make sense of their experiences of violence and adversity. As described above, the “existing relational structures” (Heine et al. 2006, p. 89 as cited in Chapter 2) which prevail in the Kivus pit non-Rwandophone Congolese against Rwandaphones; as will be shown, this identity-based othering is part of how young people “establish a sense of normalcy and coherence in their lives” (ibid.) and are thus able to cope with their experiences of violence.

Among my non-Rwandophone research participants, blame for the violence and adversity experienced in the Kivus was directly attributable to Rwanda- a dominant discourse of blame which denies the very Congolese origins and foundations of the violence. Their narratives of violence draw on social memories that had been transferred from earlier generations:

They came with their military and bullets in order to benefit from the wealth of Congo... The war remains fixed in our memory. It started when Rwanda entered the Congo. Before then, Congo was good- or at least that’s what our grandparents tell us... Now, since the Hutus came there are military and bullets. It was the first time we’d ever heard gunfire. We didn’t know why they’d come, just that they were here. The Rwandans are our true enemies. (focus group discussion, Bukavu, May 2010)

Another group of research participants explained:

The conflict started when the Hutu entered Congo, they spread throughout all the forests in Congo. We helped them, but soon they turned to pillage and rape and abduction... There

were many barriers, so many taxes to pay. We were forced to transport goods for the Hutu. We carried large loads for them. (focus group discussion, Mushinga, April 2010)

Blame and victimhood serve as the tools which young people rely on to explain- and in some cases justify- a situation which seems impossible to change or to influence. By conceiving of 'Rwandans-as-perpetrators', young people derive and attribute meaning to a situation in which they remain trapped:

From 1995, the Rwandaphones became our enemy, mostly the Tutsi. The RCD controlled the route from Bukavu to Hombo, they would mistreat all youth, arrest us, search our bodies for signs of being Mayi-mayi, like tattoos. Young people were forced to join them- anyway youth had no other choices beyond the army. Girls were raped, boys were forced to rape girls, even their sisters. From that time onwards, our advancement has been prevented. (interview, Bunyakiri, May 2010)

As repeatedly emerged in discussions with young people, blame on others helps them to make sense of their own lack of progress. One of my research participants explained: "the war has made me go backwards- today I should be somewhere else in my life" (interview, Mushinga, April 2010), repeating a phrase I had heard expressed among other research participants, particularly young men. During another discussion, young people explained that "we are blocked in our lives because of the war" (focus group discussion, Bunyakiri, May 2010).

The psychological protection accorded by blaming an 'other' was evident among my research participants, even as this blame contributed to strengthening their sense of victimhood which in turn reinforced their perceived position of weakness and powerlessness. Such externalisation of responsibility allows individuals to cope with a situation which they feel otherwise powerless to control, but at the same time such externalisation reduces individual efforts to overcome imposed constraints (see Sheppard and Crocker 2008). In this way, reliance on blame and victim-perpetrator discourses reinforces young people's belief that they are not able to change their circumstances which in turn contributes to a situation in which their circumstances do not change.

Young people's perceived powerlessness means that they do not hold their government to account and do not engage in the political actions which would be needed to begin engaging with the structures of violence to eventually contribute to changing them. Instead, discourses of blame and victimhood are therefore nurtured as they feedback on each other, reinforced through young people's habitus of violence and eventually transferred to subsequent generations.

Victim-perpetrator discourses and blame also prevail at the political level, where the dominant public narrative of violence is of Congolese 'victims' being attacked by Rwandan 'perpetrators'.⁵⁸ Termed "an integral part of the governmental rationalities" (Hoffman 2007, p. 10), violent identity-based politics have long been used by Congolese leaders to blame others and thus to deflect attention away from the effectiveness of their rule. This strategy occurs at the national level, but also in regional and local politics. For example, a Hunde traditional chief in Masisi Territory explained the history of the local land conflict in the following way:

⁵⁸ A rare, more reflective perspective on the victim-perpetrator discourse was offered by a former RCD leader as he posed the question: "Were we dominated by Rwanda, or were we just very weak?" (Stearns 2011, p. 210).

Poverty here has become extreme. The land has been taken from its former owners. Traditional chiefs no longer have authority, we have been relegated to the sidelines. We, the *Congomani*- the Bahunde, Nande and Nyanga- have been forced off our land. Outside the city, the countryside is controlled by the Hutu. The Hutu also want to control the Hunde.

Before it was okay, we used to recognise the Tutsi and the Hutu as foreigners, we accepted them here. But then they thought they could have power over the autochthons. They had money, they had the cows.

Our first war was in 1965 in the *chefferie* of Bashali, the area of the Hunde. The second war was in 1992, again between the Hutu and the Hunde. After this war, the Hutu wanted to kill all the Hunde. The arrival of Hutu from Rwanda in 1994 helped them in their efforts. Then the Rwandan Tutsi came to chase after the *génocidaires*. The Tutsi were so strong. They believed that the Hunde supported the Hutu, so we were all targeted.

Now things are not good for the *Congomani*. Even me as a chief I can't access my land anymore. I have 100 hectares of land that I am unable to cultivate. What can I do? I've tried to go through the judicial system to get my land back. But when I go there, I am threatened, they hint I could be killed.

Erasto [the local Hutu militia leader/ landowner] has taken over all the land in the area, he has proclaimed himself as the traditional leader, as the chief. The Hutu population supports him, so does the CNDP.

For the future, there is no hope for the *Congomani*. For our children, there is no hope... (interview, Masisi Territory, July 2011)

By blaming Rwanda for the violence in eastern DRC and effectively focusing public attention and blame on the violent 'other', Congolese political elites at the local, provincial and national levels are able to deflect attention away from their own lack of effective leadership and inability to fulfil their obligations to the population they are responsible for governing. Serving as a useful tool to distract potential opposition away from the dysfunctions of the state towards an external 'enemy', blame also enables those benefitting from the violence to continue to do so unchecked. Blame is useful not only for the Congolese government and political and economic elites benefitting from the conditions of insecurity, but also regional actors. For example, the Rwandan government relies on victim-perpetrator discourses in denouncing the presence of the FDLR and its antecedents in the Kivus to justify its military interventions there (Reed 1998, Prunier 2009). To close the circle on blame, the FDLR also claims victim status, arguing that it has been forced to maintain a military struggle in order to create the political space in an otherwise closed and repressive system established by the Tutsi-dominated government in Kigali (based on interviews I conducted on behalf of the UN in Goma, Bukavu and at the Mutobo demobilisation centre, Rwanda, 2009). Through blame, violence is conserved and transferred beyond national borders.

As introduced in Chapter 1 above, so much of the violence in the Kivus can be traced to the long history of competition for land and resources, uncertainty relating to citizenship, and the use of identity-based discourses by political entrepreneurs. The specific geography of the Kivus and its

inseparability from the political situation in neighbouring Rwanda are also key factors in the dynamics of political violence.⁵⁹

The mobilisation of the CNDP provides a clear example of how identity, land and victim-based discourses emerge from and feed into the dynamics of violence in the Kivus. The CNDP first emerged following the 2006 Presidential and Legislative elections, which marked the end of the national political transition period that had begun in 2003 (Clark 2008a).⁶⁰ With much to lose, the elite interests which did not succeed in the elections- in particular Rwanda's proxy RCD⁶¹- re-launched their strategy of violence. Comprised of former RCD forces,⁶² the newly configured CNDP was led by General Laurent Nkunda (Scott 2008) and began a long series of military offensives which continued until early 2009. Despite various iterations of Kinshasa-led, UN-supported and Kigali-influenced negotiations, violence continued in slightly varied forms in the following years. From a functional perspective, militarised violence by the CNDP has served to protect elite Rwandaphone and Rwandan economic interests in the Kivus. Yet in terms of meaning attribution, the ideology espoused by the CNDP is strong, with explicit narratives of victimhood based in the history of displacement, lack of land access, and identity-based violence as detailed in Chapter 1 above. The 1994 Rwandan genocide remains the key narrative in the CNDP's justification for militarised protection (see Uvin 1998, Story 1999), as do the multiple episodes of violence against Rwandaphones in the Kivus over the last decades. These narratives are transferred through social memories and feature regularly in pronouncements of the CNDP 'cause'.

Young people in the Kivus have assimilated these narratives within their meaning-attribution frameworks and rely on them to make sense of their experiences of violence. J-, a 14-year-old CNDP former soldier who I interviewed in 2009, explained his reasons for having voluntarily enlisted:

I wanted to fight to serve the Cause. We [Tutsi Congolese] have always been attacked by the others. My parents are still living in the refugee camps in Rwanda with 50,000 of our brothers and sisters. They are suffering there, and even though they want to come back, they cannot as their land has been taken and they fear they'll be killed. I'd like to continue to support the Cause, to protect our people, to make it safe enough for my parents to come back home. (interview conducted on behalf of the UN, Goma, May 2009)

This discourse is strongly internalised by the Tutsi soldiers and commanders who I spoke with over the years.⁶³ This identity-based, ideological 'cause' provides great military advantage to the CNDP in their battles against the poorly paid, badly trained and generally unmotivated FARDC forces. By 2009, the CNDP had won its military offensive against the DRC government,⁶⁴ leading to the Goma Peace Agreement in which the CNDP integrated into the FARDC. By 2012, however, the rebellion

⁵⁹ The close linkages between the CNDP and Rwanda are relevant: the RPF/ RPA war against the Hutu regime in Kigali drew in the Tutsi of North Kivu, with most families sending at least one son to fight in Rwanda or Uganda in support of the RPF forces (Stearns 2011). Each of the CNDP officers who I knew had spent at least a few years training with the RPA in Uganda in the early 1990s, or had served in Rwanda during and after the genocide (based on multiple interviews and informal discussions I held with CNDP leaders between 2006- 2011).

⁶⁰ During this period, violence in the Kivus continued, escalating as the 2006 elections approached as violent identity-based politics regained their hold in public discourse (see Clark 2008a).

⁶¹ The RCD remains deeply unpopular at the local level due both to the extremes of violence it enacted on the population (Stearns 2011) as well as to the Rwandaphone interests it represented (Scott 2008, Prunier 2009)

⁶² The *Armée Nationale Congolaise* (ANC) served as the armed wing of the RCD.

⁶³ Young men who were not Tutsi who had been forcibly recruited to the CNDP clearly did not share this discourse.

⁶⁴ The purported assistance of the Rwandan government considerably strengthened the CNDP's military advantage (United Nations 2008).

resurged, as several key CNDP leaders created the new M23 movement. Justifying their rebellion with the same discourses of the past, the M23 spokesperson explained in August 2012:

We are Congolese. We have a cause ... We want the 2009 agreement to be respected. That is ensuring of democracy. Sixty thousand of our family members are refugees in neighboring countries and need to come back home, we want the issue of military ranks and salaries to be addressed as well. (News of Rwanda 2012)

Anchored in identity politics, the victim narrative of the CNDP/M23 speaks to the continued lack of redress for the historically-rooted issues of land access and political inclusion for the Rwandaphone population. The poetics of victimhood continue to draw on historic marginalisation and perceived threat which are transmitted across generations and which have become firmly transcribed in social memories.

The land and identity-based claims advanced by the CNDP are mirrored in the mobilisation of various Mayi-mayi groups throughout the Kivus. The Mayi-mayi are armed groups which have historically mobilised to protect local interests and to gain control of land and resources. Initially a product of the 1960s autonomy movements (Young 1966), Mayi-mayi groups resurged during the 1996- 2003 wars and have since remained important actors in the political violence in eastern DRC (Hoffman 2007). Mayi-mayi groups are usually mono-ethnic and therefore make their political claims along identity-based lines. Exemplifying how the discourse surrounding Mayi-mayi mobilisation is tied to land and identity, a news report written in March 2012 described how:

the situation in [North Kivu] is explosive... Mayi-mayi groups, who claim that they have been dispossessed of their land by the cattle-herders from the region, have taken up arms against the CNDP soldiers integrated into the FARDC. (Radio France International 2012, my translation)

In this account, the camouflaged but locally understood references to ‘cattle herders’ and ‘CNDP soldiers’ clearly ascribe responsibility for the violence to Tutsi Congolese. Often Mayi-mayi discourse decries the presence of foreigners, in particular Tutsi Rwandaphones, while their violent tactics of defence are portrayed as efforts towards “liberating, reinvigorating and securing an autochthonous Congolese ‘cultural’ dimension...free from foreign influence” (Hoffman 2007, p. 8).

The protective role played by the Mayi-mayi regularly featured in the narratives of my research participants and was an important element in their meaning-attribution processes. Usually Mayi-mayi are described by young people as local heroes who protect their communities from aggressive perpetrators. As an example, my research participants in Mushinga explained how the Mudundu 40 (or the M40) Mayi-mayi group mobilised during the 1998- 2003 war in response to constant attacks and pillage by the RCD and the FDLR forces:

With all the attacks, a movement called the M40 was created. They fought against the Hutu. They pushed the Hutu away from here. After a while, the RCD arrived. The M40 fought against them too, but were beaten by the RCD. For six months we were all displaced in the forest. The RCD undertook exactions, pillaged the hospital and the church. In the forest, the M40 reorganised itself to fight against the RCD. They managed to chase the RCD away and the population was able to return to Mushinga. We lived with the M40, they protected us.

From the south M40 fought the Hutu, and from the north it fought the RCD. (focus group discussion, Mushinga, April 2010)

Mayi-mayi have been described as a bottom-up solution to social and economic marginalisation (Vlassenroot 2000b) within a political landscape where elite interests rarely correspond with local needs and where the Congolese state offers little protection to the population. Yet, while mobilising in self-defence, contemporary Mayi-mayi movements are also critiqued for pursuing their own material interests, often enacting violence against the very population they claim to protect. From this perspective, Mayi-mayi have been described as “‘social bandits’ whose problem is chiefly economic” (Prunier 2009, p. 321). Through regular attacks on civilian populations, Mayi-mayi lose their moral high ground, which in turn obfuscates the protective role otherwise assumed by them. A 14-year-old research participant in Mushinga explained:

During the war, we had a little money because my father had been able to sell six of our cows. But then one day the M40 came and took our money. They burnt our house. We fled to Mushinga, then to Mususu... The M40 used to force us to work for them. If we refused, we’d be imprisoned. (interview, Mushinga, May 2010)

My research participants expressed a sense of disillusionment of having lost control of the heroic narrative which often surrounds accounts of Mayi-mayi mobilisation. Not able to purely conceive of the Mayi-mayi as ‘local protectors’ against ‘foreign aggressors’, they acknowledged that mobilisation to violence was also about access to material resources. Yet such a pragmatic analysis left them feeling more troubled and less able to make sense of the experiences of violence they had survived than a narrative which clearly identified them as victims being protected by the Mayi-mayi from perpetrating Rwandan ‘others’. The absence of meaning- or the loss of meaning- and its impact on coping processes is described in greater detail further below.

SHAME AND HUMILIATION

Related to the expressions of blame and victimhood are shame and humiliation, two highly subjective and individualised psycho-emotional responses which play a specific role in processes of meaning attribution. As has been shown through research in diverse contexts within the fields of psychology (Gilligan 2003), political economy (Keen 2002) and politics (Eriksson Baaz and Stern 2010), shame and humiliation are likely to play a significant role in the perpetration of violence, even if little about the processes underlying these responses is understood.⁶⁵

According to Gilligan (2003), shame and humiliation are among the most psychologically destructive human emotions and are closely linked to the human urge to enact violence. Based on his work with men incarcerated in American prisons, Gilligan (ibid., p. 1154) argues that the basic psychological motive driving violent behaviour is “the wish to ward off or eliminate the feeling of shame and

⁶⁵ My own experience of witnessing or documenting violence in the Kivus has led me to consider shame and humiliation as key elements in processes of meaning attribution. As much as in trying to understand how young people make sense of violence, throughout my time in the Kivus I would go through my own process of trying to understand some of the more gruesome acts of violence I witnessed or documented. A perspective on shame and humiliation seemed especially pertinent when considering certain events, for example an attack by the CNDP against Hutu villagers in Rutshuru in early 2007 which involved the laceration of pregnant women’s abdomens and the dumping corpses head first into pit latrines (documented on behalf of UN, North Kivu, May 2007), or an FARDC attack on an FDLR camp in the Shario forest where a young man had his eyes gauged out with a knife and was then ordered to “Go find your way back to Rwanda now” (interview conducted on behalf of the UN, Goma, May 2009).

humiliation—a feeling that is painful and can even be intolerable and overwhelming”.⁶⁶ Drawing on a contrasting context, Gilligan explains how humiliation can be a significant factor motivating young people in Palestine to become suicide bombers: “seen as inferior and subjected to insult and contempt” (ibid., p. 1152 cited Stern 2003), suicide bombing from this perspective is considered a means for retaliating against the imposition of shame. In this way, humiliation is a reaction to feelings of powerlessness and the inability to prevent or respond to injustice, which then leads to acts of violence. From this perspective, it is the inability to cope with feelings or shame or humiliation that leads to acts of violence.⁶⁷

Shame and humiliation have been used to explain why brutal acts of violence are committed against civilian populations in times of conflict. Keen (2002) has examined the role of shame and humiliation in the use of violence by the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in the Sierra Leonean war between 1991 and 2002. According to his research with RUF elements and members of the local population, Keen shows how violence can be considered as a means to reverse injustice, to command respect from others, and to react against the disillusionment of inequality and structural poverty:

many youths and young men in Sierra Leone have been interested in inflicting not only violence but also some kind of humiliation. This has included attempts to compel ‘approval’ of, or indifference towards, atrocities from the relatives of those directly abused, as if the rebels were staging a bizarre drama with a script that made them, for once, look like ‘big men’. (ibid., p. 6)

Keen argues that shame can lead to the perpetration of extreme acts of violence when three conditions are met: when there is the desire to eradicate those who cause the feelings of humiliation, when there is a label of inhumanity attached to the perpetrator of violence, and when there is a wish to command respect. This complex nexus between shame, desire for respect, and perpetration of extreme violence was evident during a visit I made to Kasika, in Mwenga Territory, South Kivu in August 2009.⁶⁸ My visit to Kasika coincided with the ten year commemoration of the August 1999 Kasika massacre, in which- according to local accounts- 1,041 civilians were killed during an RCD offensive that had been launched as a reprisal attack following the killing of a senior RCD commander by the Kasika Mayi-mayi who had set up an ambush on the RCD’s path.⁶⁹ The RCD offensive in response was brutal and indiscriminate; the people who I spoke with offered detailed narratives of the gruesome events they had lived through that day including witnessing the rape and killing of nuns, the killing of pregnant women and the removal of their fetuses, the clubbing to death of anyone unable to run away, as well as numerous decapitations. The meanings which were attributed by the local population to this disproportionate use of violence by the RCD included Rwanda’s humiliation of having lost one of their senior commanders in a local Mayi-mayi attack as

⁶⁶ According to Gilligan, these feelings are associated with a lack of love, especially in childhood, as well as a “deficiency of self-love” (Gilligan 2003, p. 1154). The “lack of love” [*la manque d’amour*] was an expression frequently used by my research participants to explain why Congolese authorities did not fulfil their obligations to the population, and why corruption among political elites is so intractable.

⁶⁷ Interpretations of violence clearly differ by context and by historical moment. For example, in his work against French colonial rule in Algeria, Fanon (ibid., p. 74) describes violence as a form of empowerment: “violence is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect.”

⁶⁸ This visit was conducted as part of a UN investigation into the actions of the recently remobilised Kasika Mayi-mayi group and their alleged collaboration with the FDLR.

⁶⁹ According to Prunier (2009, p. 205), 600 people were killed at Kasika, a massacre which would have served as a reprisal attack for the killing of Banyamulenge by the population in Uvira, South Kivu, in late August 1999; this variation in explanation of the same violent event merely highlights the malleability of meanings attributed to violence.

well as serving to punish the local population for their presumed collaboration with the Mayi-mayi. People explained that the brutality used by the RCD forces was meant to serve as a warning against any future attacks against them, while the humiliation inflicted through violence was intended to teach them to fear the power and strength of the RCD and Rwandan forces.

For the survivors of the Kasika massacre, the humiliation of the violence experienced in 1999 resurfaced in 2009 when operations against the FDLR were launched by the Congolese government, initially with the support of the Rwandan army, and eventually with the UN peacekeeping forces. The FARDC commanders who were leading the operations in Mwenga Territory included those associated with the CNDP who had previously been part of the RCD army. The bitter irony for the people of Kasika was that the 2009 FARDC deployment to their area was led by the same commanders who, formerly associated with the RCD, had perpetrated the 1999 massacre. For them, the decision to deploy the same commanders to Kasika served as a humiliating confirmation of the powerlessness of the civilian population. The consequent remobilisation of the Kasika Mayi-mayi represented a response to this affront; to cope with the humiliation imposed on them through the government-led military operations, the local population supported the recourse to violence by the Mayi-mayi.

The levels of brutality experienced during the Kasika violence in 1999 were similarly evident in accounts relating to other acts of violence perpetrated by the FDLR in the Kivus. During my work with the UN, I documented a large number of testimonies of brutal massacres, burning of villages, and rape of civilians as perpetrated by the FDLR, attacks which increased dramatically with the launch of the government-led operations against the FDLR in 2009. To make sense of these humiliations, my research participants would rely on blame and victim-perpetrator discourses. As explained by one young person:

Life here is very mediocre because of the FDLR. I was very young during the worst of the war, but I know the FDLR killed people. They beat people, burnt villages, raped women. They are of bad heart. They would force children to rape their mothers and those children have had to live with that shame for their whole lives. They'd put babies in the place where they make manioc flour, and grind them into nothing. (interview, Bunyakiri, June 2010)

Like the violence enacted by the RCD troops, narratives of the violence enacted by the FDLR tend to emphasise the levels of brutality used.⁷⁰ Yet the FDLR had not always featured as a main 'enemy' in the constantly shifting victim-perpetrator narratives prevailing in the Kivus. Between 2006 and 2009, the FDLR had been considered an armed force which could at times be useful in Kinshasa's regional security strategy and at other times a helpful ally against the CNDP (see Prunier 2009, also based on my own observations between 2006- 2009), while in general they had co-existed with the local population. In 2009, however, the FDLR was transformed in public discourses as the greatest security threat, a position which had been consistently advanced by Kigali and which was fully supported by the UN peacekeeping mission.⁷¹ As a consequence of the new military offensive against them, the

⁷⁰ Within local narratives, the brutality of acts perpetrated by the FDLR is often contrasted with accounts of the generosity which had initially been shown by the Congolese population to the arriving Hutu refugees in the wake of the Rwandan genocide (as described in Chapter 5 in relation to the loss of social trust); that these refugees eventually turned to looting and pillage of their hosts represents a great affront and remains deeply etched in social memories.

⁷¹ However, in the fluid victim-perpetrator narratives which dominate in the Kivus, by the end of 2012 the enemy discourse had once again shifted, this time focussing on the M23 as the main public enemy.

FDLR launched brutal reprisal attacks against a civilian population with which it had, until recently, co-existed.

Such violent transformations are similarly examined by Keen (2002) in his analysis of how the RUF in Sierra Leone went from being a rebel group which benefitted from at least tacit support of the population to eventually alienating the population through extreme acts of violence. To explain this shift towards brutal acts of violence, Keen evokes Shakespeare's Shylock in the *Merchant of Venice* to show how accusations of inhumanity can lead to inhuman acts: "Since I am a dog, beware my fangs..." (ibid., p. 9). From this perspective, the launching of military operations against the FDLR turned them into the vicious attackers who raped, abducted and pillaged an otherwise defenceless civilian population.⁷²

While Congolese narratives usually blame brutal violence on Rwanda and explain it as an import to the Kivus since the 1994 genocide (multiple interviews, North and South Kivu, 2010- 2011), extreme acts of violence are also perpetrated by Congolese forces on the civilian population. The role of shame and humiliation in violence as perpetrated by the FARDC has been analysed by Eriksson Baaz and Stern (2010), who make linkages between the exactions committed by the national army on the civilian population and the extremely adverse conditions to which the FARDC soldiers have been historically subjected. As early as the 1980s, Mobutu no longer paid soldiers' salaries, expecting them instead to find their own way, or to '*se débrouiller*' (Stearns 2011, see also Chapter 2 and Chapter 4 above). Without sufficient material means to earn a basic livelihood, government soldiers were consequently left relying upon the population for their own survival. While my adult research informants would state that in the early 1990s the population was willing to provide food to soldiers and their families (multiple informal interviews, Goma and Bukavu, 2010 and 2011), the conditions of poverty are today so widespread and the material resources so limited that there is no longer enough for the civilian population to share. Yet the soldiers still need to live, and so with the force accorded by their weapons, they regularly rely on looting or extortion to meet their material needs.

Related to the adverse living conditions imposed on FARDC soldiers, Eriksson Baaz and Stern (2010, see also Autesserre 2012) extend the lens of shame and humiliation to their analysis of acts of sexual violence perpetrated by FARDC soldiers. According to them, the lack of respect accorded to soldiers, both by their hierarchies who do not assure their basic conditions of a satisfactory livelihood, and by a civilian population long exhausted by repeated experiences of abuse at their hands, plays an important function in leading to feelings of humiliation and shame which are then enacted through sexual violence. According to extensive in-depth interviews conducted by Baaz and Stern (2010, p. 31- 32), soldiers justify acts of rape as not being "connected to sexual satisfaction but as being driven by 'a wish to humiliate the dignity of people' or 'to sully people'... a result of frustration and anger related to their living conditions". Such an analysis can be used to exemplify Enloe's (2000) typology of militarised sexual violence- elaborated in a study of sexual violence in other contexts of conflict- where rape during war is analytically differentiated as 'rape as recreation', rape as an instrument of national security, and the phenomenon of 'lootpillagelandrape'. In the context of the Kivus,

⁷² The lens of shame and humiliation for understanding the brutal reprisal attacks by the FDLR against the civilian population in 2009 would likely be refuted by the FDLR; former FDLR combatants instead explained that their strategy of brutality had been ordered at the highest command of the FDLR with the aim of providing as loud a voice as possible to their political claims in neighbouring Rwanda (multiple interviews in Mutobo DRRRR camp, Rwanda, August 2009 and in Goma and Bukavu in 2009 on behalf of the UN). According to this perspective, through the use of extreme violence the FDLR leadership was attempting to channel international attention towards the lack of political space available for expressing opposition to the RPF-dominated regime in Rwanda.

militarised sexual violence can be considered as an expression of ‘lootpillagelandrape’, rape being situated within a broader spectrum of violence enacted by long-humiliated predatory forces.

Recalling Kleinman’s (2000) ‘cascade of violence’ (as cited in Chapter 4), a perspective on shame and humiliation can also support analytical exploration of sexual violence in the DRC as perpetrated by civilians. According to my research participants- young people and adults alike- frustration, shame and anger are also felt by civilian men who are unable to effectively cope with the constraints of structural violence and protracted poverty. Echoing research findings in other contexts where poverty, unemployment and personal frustration have been correlated with increased patterns of self-destruction and violence against women (Howe and Uvin 2009), my research participants similarly attributed meaning to the phenomenon of sexual violence in the Kivus as follows:

Sexual violence by civilians is partly caused by high rates of unemployment. People have nothing else to do. They feel isolated and hopeless and without power. They don’t even have a house. How can they even think about tomorrow? (focus group discussion, Bunyakiri, April 2010)

My young research participants did not offer this explanation as a way of justifying the perpetration of violence, yet their humanising perspective contrasts starkly with the narrations of barbarity and senselessness which dominate international media and policy narratives of sexual violence in eastern DRC today.⁷³

SUPPRESSION OF DISSENT: VIOLENCE WITHOUT MEANING

As expressed in the narratives of my research participants above, identity-based, victim-perpetrator discourses are essential in helping young people make sense of brutal violence and thus in allowing them to cope with these experiences. Yet, in the Kivus, there is also violence for which meanings are not attributed and for which coherence cannot be derived. This section now describes how violence has been used to suppress dissent in the DRC; as will be seen, the absence of poetics, ambiguity or victim-perpetrator discourses in suppressive violence precludes a sense of coherence and thus has a psychologically negative impact on young people. The consequent sense of hopelessness reduces their capacities for coping with the violences they experience each day.

In the colonial period, the *Forces Publiques* had as their main priority to thwart any challenge to Belgian rule, often through the use of brutal tactics of population control (Hochschild 1998). On gaining independence in 1960, the state did not exercise a Weberian monopoly over the use of force,⁷⁴ and a series of armed rebellions and attempted successions were fought then quelled in Katanga (1960-1963), south Kasai (1960-1961), Kwilu (1963- 1965), and Province Orientale and the Kivus (1964-1966) (Young 1966). Following independence, the Belgian *Forces Publiques* were eventually replaced by the *Forces Armées Zairoises* (FAZ), whose primary objective was the suppression of any internal opposition which might rise up against Mobutu’s rule from Kinshasa (Eriksson Baaz and Stern 2010). Oppressive violence was not the exclusive remit of the national

⁷³ As noted Eriksson Baaz and Stern (2010, p. 13) the dominant form of international reporting on sexual violence in eastern DRC contributes to “a recycling and reinforcement of racialised stereotypes”.

⁷⁴ According to Young (1966, p. 35), the monopoly on force which may have been held by the colonial authorities had been lost “a week after independence.”

armed forces, however, as Mobutu relied on a variety of specialised security forces which played an essential role in suppressing resistance throughout Zaire (Stearns 2011).

The DRC has been described as a place where the dominant expectations are for “petty tyrants to use coercion freely, government officials to deploy violent punishments when they can catch their enemies, and means of violence to be widely distributed across other political actors” (Tilly 2003, p. 52). In this way, the use of violence to suppress dissent has long been a favoured political tool. In the Kivus especially, political and economic elites have been able to successfully mobilise and manipulate armed groups towards the advancement of their own interests, while also relying on violence to repel any possible opposition to their dominance. The reliance on violence as a key political strategy is a lesson which has been well-assimilated by the population.⁷⁵

Learning through example, my research participants believed that the only way to engage in the political process in the DRC is to take up arms: “In this *état de guerre* [state of war] power can only be held by the one who has a weapon” (focus group discussion, Bunyakiri, May 2010). Young people are aware that the reliance on violence as a political strategy is founded in history; as explained by my research participants: “the system of oppression began during the Mobutu years when any emerging opposition would be blocked... These lessons were learnt from the Belgians” (focus group discussion, Bunyakiri, May 2010).

Violence has been effective in silencing opposition in the Kivus. Young people have learnt to fear the use of violence against them and thus do not voice their dissatisfaction with the political situation too loudly. My research participants in Bukavu explained the reasons why they were afraid of speaking out against the structures of violence through an example of a well-known singer in Goma who had disappeared after having recorded a popular song critiquing the lack of government progress on economic development:

If we try to liberate ourselves, we'll just be killed. Any protesters are jailed now- like that 17-year-old singer who sang against the *Cinq Chantiers*⁷⁶ earlier this year. He disappeared. If we aim to be heroes, we'll be killed like he probably was. So it's better just to suffer.
(discussion, Bukavu, May 2010).

This fear of dissent was felt not just by young people whose habitus of violence has been reinforced throughout their lives, but also by adults who have a longer perspective. One of my adult informants in North Kivu explained how the culture of fear prevents opposition to the political situation:

Let's say there are 1,000 people who are opposed to what the government is doing. Of them, maybe five of them will refuse to accept the situation any longer. They will rise up. But in rising up, they create great risks for themselves and their families, and they know it. They will be threatened- they might receive a text message, or be told of a rumour about someone threatening to kill them. They might be attacked in their homes. Their wives might

⁷⁵ It could be expected that civil society in the Kivus would represent an important counterforce to this violence. However, according to local sources, whenever civil society actors gain enough popular support to begin representing a real threat to the existing structures of violence, they are paid off; in this way, non-violent political pressure is co-opted and diverted. Similar processes have been documented in other contexts affected by war, where it is noted that: “The flourishing of civil society and social movements requires a relatively strong state capable of protecting civil society and enforcing rights. The groups that do get into a position to bargain with the state often bargain for things less noble than democratisation and civilianisation” (Leander 2004, p. 77- 78).

⁷⁶ The ‘*Cinq Chantiers*’ are the five pillars of economic development and governance on which President Kabila based his 2006 election campaign and subsequent government strategy.

be raped. They might be killed. Maybe a few of them will continue to oppose the government anyway, and they will be attacked. But in any case, they are just the few. The other 995 people will see this- they've seen it all before- and their fears will be reinforced. Because of their fear, they will not rise up, they will not be too vocal in their dissent. They will accept. If we revolt, we'll be killed. Who wants to die? And for what? (interview, Goma, June 2011)

While sharing this explanation with me, my informant was visibly angry, yet his anger was superseded by fear and a sense of defeat. Over the years, he had witnessed the killing of outspoken friends and colleagues in Goma and in Bukavu- they had been human rights activists, journalists and civil society actors whose vocal protests had led to their deaths, but to no change in the situation. As a father of three children and the main income earner for his extended family, survival was more important to him than giving voice to his dissent. He had chosen not to speak out against the profound injustices and imposed fears of each day knowing that it would be futile for him to do so. He had internalised this fear and yielded to the powerlessness of his position within the structures of violence. Like the 99.5% of the people in his example, he would go on submitting to the political violence that he considered himself to be powerless to change.

While opposition in the Kivus has been effectively suppressed, there are exceptional cases where people refuse to submit to the structures of violence. The consequences of such refusal are not just represented in the threats of assassination mentioned above, but also of marginalisation and isolation. This was demonstrated by a man who I met in a village an hour drive from Kitchanga, in a heavily militarised rural area of Masisi Territory. In this area, most people survive through subsistence farming and daily wage labour, even as they are heavily taxed by soldiers when they return home each day from their fields or as they are on their way to the market. It is a fertile, resource-rich area where continuing cycles of violence have led to repeated waves of population displacement, and where identity politics have reinforced a climate of fear and distrust.

I visited this village as part of a project evaluation which I was conducting on behalf of an international NGO. Included in the methodology of my evaluation were group interviews, which I convened in a small *pointe d'écoute*, or a 'listening point', where children are encouraged to visit in case they need help or psychosocial support from a trained community support worker. In the middle of one of these conversations with a group of women, a man suddenly burst in, shouting: "Madame, I must talk to you!" His arms were flailing and his eyes were bright. Within a few seconds, the NGO driver - who considered himself responsible for my safety- along with a few young men who had been lingering outside came in to restrain him. They tried to hold the man's arms and force him out of the small room, but he became even more agitated, shouting loudly and pleading with me to speak with him. Although aware that I could quite easily be punched in the face by this man, I held eye contact with him and touched his arm gently. I asked him if he would like to sit down.

Almost instantly, he was calm. I convinced the driver and young men restraining him to release their hold. They replied in a protective attempt at dissuasion: "But he is crazy, Madame Claudia. A totally crazy man. A drunkard. You don't have to talk to him." I insisted that I would like to hear him- we were, after all, in a *pointe d'écoute*- and I wanted to listen to what he had to say. They eventually relented and grudgingly left us in the room. For the next twenty minutes, this man, who introduced himself as Professor Alex, recounted a story of hopelessness and anger in perfectly articulated

French. Formerly a history teacher, Professor Alex explained the desperate conditions in which he, his family, and indeed the whole country, were living:

We have no human rights, *Madame*. Look at this! Look at how we live! They say we are a democracy now in Congo, but it is a dictatorship. Any time we try to stand up, we get shot down. Look here, like you saw just now, any time I try to speak, I am shut up... I am told that I have lost my mind. But I have not. I know what I'm saying... Look at these conditions of misery! Such misery. Suffering! Total suffering... We have no rights... There is no justice.

Professor Alex's narrative was repetitive, strayed from one human rights violation and indignity to another, from one battle in Masisi to the next, and to the impacts these violences were having on the population. He described the breakdown of the schooling system and his consequent unemployment.

Eventually the driver came back in to tell me that it was time for us to leave. Professor Alex became agitated again and started raising his voice. I tried to explain that I had heard him, that I absolutely agreed with him that the conditions in which the Congolese population were living were outrageous and unacceptable. I told him that I would write the story he had just recounted, that his words would find their way to a bigger audience, and that at least his story would be read by others. I wanted to believe that my affirmations might have soothed Professor Alex's distress, but once I got into the car, he tried to stop me from leaving. As we drove away, he stumbled after us on the dirt road, dust rising, still shouting after me with his arms in the air. Breaking the silence in the car as we began our drive back to Kitchanga, my colleagues wanted to assure me: "Claudia, don't worry about him. He's just a crazy old man."

I cannot know if my colleagues' response to Professor Alex was based on embarrassment, a desire not to portray weakness to an outsider, or any other complex mix of justifications. In effect, their assertion of him being mentally ill reinforced the mechanism through which one person's refusal to submit to the structures of violence can lead them to being cast to the margins of society. As Professor Alex's rage did not cohere with the dominant identity-based discourses of blame and victimhood, his voice was silenced and considered unworthy of being heard. By acknowledging the meaninglessness of the violence in the DRC, Professor Alex had thus contributed to his own marginalisation. His unwillingness to accept the unacceptable human conditions and harsh injustices of meaningless violence recalls Hannah Arendt's (1969) assertion that "impotence breeds violence" and that only "where there is reason to suspect that conditions could be changed and are not, does rage arise." By not attributing meaning to the violence, Professor Alex was unable to effectively cope with it. By refusing to submit to the structures of violence, he had effectively been rendered powerless by them.

COPING WITH AND CONSERVING VIOLENCE

Human beings are meaning-makers, with meaning providing the anchoring from which we make sense of our place in the world. As seen in the discussion above, dealing effectively with the chaos and uncertainty of war requires the capacity to attribute meanings to violence in ways that make it possible to be able to continue living through it, for example through victim-perpetrator discourses or other 'poetics' of violence. If one is unable to attribute such meanings and is left with the

knowledge that violence is only for suppression or is otherwise meaningless, the result as demonstrated by my research participants is a lack of hope that the violence might ever end and a general sense of desperation that one's conditions will never change.

In the Kivus, identity-based, victim-perpetrator discourses and blame can help individuals make sense of violence, and in this way these meanings are psychologically protective. These meanings allow one to interpret the loss and difficulties experienced in a way which allows for coherence in an otherwise difficult-to-comprehend situation. Yet, while these meanings allow young people to cope with their experiences of violence, they also contribute to the continuation of violence. For example, blaming and considering oneself to be a victim of aggression or attack from Rwanda or Rwandaphones allows non-Rwandaphones to make sense of the violence which they have lived through for most or all of their lives. At the same time, Rwandaphones consider themselves to be victims of aggression from other Congolese, vulnerable to attack, without alternatives for protection and thus dependent on militarised violence to protect and advance their interests. With these two irreconcilable perspectives, identity-based positions become entrenched and are passed on to subsequent generations through narratives and social memory.

While it is evident that such processes of meaning attribution contribute to conserving the structures of violence in the Kivus, the potentially negative consequences of not attributing such meanings has also been seen.⁷⁷ As I regularly witnessed among my research participants, the absence of meaning and its resulting sense of hopelessness can have a significantly negative impact on their capacities for effective coping. According to psychologists, hope is an essential aspect in supporting an individual's capacities to survive (Zrally 2008, p. 80 cited Lothe and Heggen 2003), with a belief in the future and faith that difficult life events can be overcome being considered key to coping with adversity (Luthar 1991). Often my research participants would express a deep sense of hopelessness about their situation. Explanations of "that's just how it is" (as cited above) demonstrate how young people submit to the conditions which they have learnt they are powerless to change. When I asked my research participants about their perspectives for the future, their responses offered little consolation: "How do we look at the future? Life will always be like this. Or worse" (focus group discussion, Mushinga, May 2010). The sense of hopelessness is not only felt at the personal level, but also colours prospects for the country's future. Young people reaffirmed that "*in ce Congo mort* [in this dead Congo]" little would ever change (focus group discussion, Bukavu, May 2010, as cited in Chapter 1). One young man asked, without actually expecting an answer from me: "this conflict, will it ever really end?" (interview, Goma, February 2009). Research participants described politics in the Kivus as "being locked in an infernal cycle of violence" (group interview, Goma, June 2011). One young woman explained:

All we know is suffering, there is still violence, still war and hunger. People are being killed. Roads are not built. There is no support for school fees. Nothing has changed for us. We are not free. There is little reason to believe that we ever will be. (interview, Bukavu, May 2010)

⁷⁷ Exploring the notion of 'cultural trauma' Fassin and Rechtman (2009, p. 17) quote Eyerman (2001) who describes cultural trauma as "a dramatic loss of identity and meaning, a tear in the social fabric, affecting a group of people that has achieved some degree of cohesion."

Young people thus contribute to the processes of rendering themselves powerless, unwilling to resist or to make efforts towards changing the structures of violence in which they are embedded. As explained to me by a local authority in North Kivu:

This complacency, this unwillingness to change things, this acceptance of violence, it dates back to the history of colonialism. Then, we were taught to accept anything we were given. That's how we remain today. (interview, Lubero, August 2011)

Being a victim of history prevents efforts to mobilise against change at the political and structural level. The structures of violence can thus continue to operate unrestrained and unopposed, becoming part of the 'common sense' of violence and the every day. Returning to Bourdieu's (2000, p. 173 as cited above) explanation of a habitus as that which is "self-evident, natural, taken for granted", it is the acceptance of violence which allows for its conservation. As shown in other war-affected contexts, "people adapt their cultural skills to higher norms of violence- transforming, unwittingly supporting, and in due time domesticating these patterns of violence" (Richards 1996, p. 24). In this way, the 'predictability' (Giddens 1995, p. 197) of violence does not just happen, but is made to happen.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ Adapted from the idea advanced by Giddens (1995, p. 197) that the "'predictability' of social life does not merely 'happen' but is 'made to happen' as an outcome of the consciously applied skills of social actors".

CHAPTER 7: INTERNATIONAL CHILD PROTECTION INTERVENTIONS AND THE CONSERVATION OF VIOLENCE

Violence and young people's mechanisms for coping with it are not contained within proscribed geographical spaces; rather, the structures of violence described in the preceding chapters are part of a dynamic system of exchange occurring within a global political economy of violence. Interrogating how violence generates and is generated by international responses to it, this chapter specifically looks at international child protection interventions within a larger international humanitarian aid system operating in response to violence in the Kivus and how these interventions relate to young people's coping processes. The first section of the chapter provides an overview of the international child protection regime and some of its main critiques as outlined in the literature. The second section discusses three of the key weaknesses of child protection interventions in the context of the Kivus, including the problem of focussing only on specific, disaggregated types of violence; the irrelevance of interventions in responding to young people's actual needs; and the focus on vulnerability which leads to the weakening of young people's capacities for coping with violence. By integrating the concepts of morality and denial, the third section of the chapter questions how, despite its limitation, the international humanitarian aid system- of which the international child protection regime is a part- continues to operate as it does, and how it contributes to strengthening the structures of violence in the Kivus.

INTERNATIONAL CHILD PROTECTION INTERVENTIONS IN VIOLENT CONFLICT

INTERNATIONAL CHILD PROTECTION REGIME: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

While efforts to establish an international child protection regime began following the First World War (Sabatello 2009, Hart and Lo Forte 2010),⁷⁹ it was not until the end of the Cold War- and the consequent geopolitical shift from interstate to intrastate conflicts- that international policy attention turned to the impacts of violence on children.⁸⁰ In line with the universalist human-rights based movement that burgeoned in the 1990s- and which transgressed earlier standards that protected national sovereignty- international legal instruments were drawn up to guard against the exploitation and abuse of children living in situations of violent conflict. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1989 was followed by a series of other international legal instruments developed to protect children, including the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child,⁸¹ the Optional Protocols to the CRC,⁸² and the International Labour Organisation's Convention 182 against the worst forms of child labour.⁸³ These legal instruments lay the foundation for the international child protection regime, and are translated

⁷⁹ The Declaration of the Rights of the Child was adopted by the League of Nations in 1924, then by the United Nations General Assembly in 1959. It was eventually formalised by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) which was adopted by the General Assembly (Resolution 44/25) in 1989.

⁸⁰ As exemplified in the UN study entitled *The Impact of War on Children* by Graça Machel (United Nations 1996).

⁸¹ The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, OAU Doc. CAB/LEG/24.9/49 (1990) was adopted 29 November 1999. (Organisation of African States/ African Union 1999)

⁸² The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, A/RES/54/263, adopted on 20 May 2000 (United Nations 2000).

⁸³ ILO Convention 182, entitled the "Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour", was adopted in 1999 (International Labour Organisation 1999).

into policy and practice by a wide array of UN offices and agencies, international and NGOs, and civil society actors throughout the world working in the field of child protection.

International child protection is defined as the policies and practices which aim “to prevent and respond to violence, exploitation and abuse against children” (UNICEF 2006) at the international level. According to this perspective, each state government has the primary responsibility for preventing and responding to abuses against children:

Child protection is a fundamental responsibility of the state as articulated explicitly or assumed by various international legal instruments and conventions. This responsibility involves measures to prevent any form of violence, abuse and neglect as well as the care of children for whom prevention measures have proven insufficient. The state is responsible for drafting national laws ensuring that the rights of the child are adequately addressed and for enhancing national policies and allocating sufficient budgetary resources for the functioning of such a system throughout its sovereign territory. (Hart and Lo Fort 2010, p. 21)

Although the primary role for child protection is ascribed to the state, in many contexts of violent conflict, government capacity, resources or will are not sufficient to enforce the commitments outlined by legal child protection instruments, even if these instruments have been signed and ratified. In contexts of state weakness, international child protection actors- including UN agencies and offices as well as a large cohort of international and national NGOs- try to assume the role of the state by developing policies, programmes and projects intended to serve as intermediate solutions for the protection of children until the state is able to assume its leadership role in doing so.

In conflict-affected contexts, child protection interventions are carried out by UN actors, NGOs and other international organisations. These interventions form part of a larger division of responsibility among international humanitarian aid actors who provide responses according to specific themes; for example in the provision of clean water and sanitation, emergency medical care, food and non-food items or shelter. The international humanitarian aid system, coordinated by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), was formalised by the UN in 1992 in order to strengthen humanitarian assistance in countries affected by conflict and natural disaster.⁸⁴ Within the IASC structure, the Global Protection Cluster is responsible for the coordination of protection activities which are defined as “all activities aimed at obtaining full respect for the rights of the individual in accordance with the letter and the spirit of the relevant bodies of law (i.e. [Human Rights] law, [International Humanitarian Law], refugee law)” (IASC 2011, p. 5). The Global Protection Cluster coordinates international protection interventions which include: child protection; gender-based violence; land, housing and property; mine action; and rule of law and justice.⁸⁵ Within the Global Protection Cluster, the Child Protection Working Group has as its objective to:

facilitate a more predictable, accountable and effective child protection response in complex emergencies, disasters and other such situations. The Child Protection Working

⁸⁴ The IASC is the international structure which is responsible for the coordination of humanitarian assistance. It is designated at the international level to coordinate humanitarian assistance and “develops humanitarian policies, agrees on a clear division of responsibility for the various aspects of humanitarian assistance, identifies and addresses gaps in response, and advocates for effective application of humanitarian principles.” Its primary objectives include the development of humanitarian policies and the division of responsibilities among humanitarian actors in order to ensure the “improved delivery of humanitarian assistance to affected populations” (Inter-Agency Standing Committee 2012a).

⁸⁵ As organised by the IASC Global Protection Cluster Working Group.

Group seeks to support cohesive, interagency child protection responses at the field-level through global level advocacy, standards and policy setting, capacity building and tool development.⁸⁶

Within this global architecture, child protection activities in contexts affected by violent conflict have become highly standardised. When populations are displaced, family tracing and reunification of separated and unaccompanied children will be carried out as a priority, while child friendly spaces will be established in displacement or refugee camps to respond to basic education, recreation and psychosocial needs of young children (International Committee of the Red Cross 2004, see also UNICEF 2011b). Where children have been associated with an armed group, their disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) will be carried out along standardised guidelines, usually at the same time that adult DDR processes are underway (Paris Principles 2007). The expected responses to sexual and gender-based violence— usually conceived of as being a result of militarised violence— are also clearly defined (Inter-Agency Standing Committee 2005). After these ‘emergency’ child protection concerns are dealt with, then there may be longer-term development interventions for ‘orphans and other vulnerable children’, a catch-all category which emerged in response to growing numbers of AIDS orphans in the 1990s, but which now also includes programmes for children orphaned by war, children living in the streets, or children in conflict with the law. Project responses to any of these child protection concerns might include a combination of support ranging from the provision of food and material support, a brief period of formal education or vocational skills-training options, as well as counselling and psychosocial follow-up (Inter-Agency Standing Committee 2007).

The international child protection regime and the international humanitarian aid system of which it is a part have developed these standardised interventions with the aim of increasing their effectiveness and accountability to the populations they have mandated themselves to protect. Yet this standardisation negates the highly specific historical, political, economic and social factors which lay the foundations for the structures of violence in each context at any given time. Such generic approaches rarely lead to an improved situation for children and young people, but rather, as will be discussed in detail in the third section of this chapter, reflect the denial which is inherent in international protection interventions and which contribute to strengthening the structures of violence.

CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE CHILD PROTECTION REGIME

Although standardisation and professionalization of international child protection interventions aim towards the achievement of outcomes to improve the situation of children affected by violent conflict, its universalised approach represents just the first of its main weaknesses. A significant body of critical literature on the universalist child protection regime has emerged from multiple disciplines for more than one decade (Boyden 1997, James and Prout 1997, Pupavac 2001, Mann 2004, Hart 2006, Macmillan 2009), yet this research seems to have had little impact on the policy and practice of international child protection. The literature is clear in its critique of the dominant child

⁸⁶ The Child Protection Working Group was established in 2005 and is convened at the country-level in humanitarian settings, with its aim being to harmonise and coordinate the delivery of child protection programmes and activities and to ensure more accountable and effective responses. In the DRC, the Child Protection Working Group is led by UNICEF and includes the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations Child Protection Section and various international NGOs (Child Protection Working Group 2012).

protection approaches, primarily as related to their anchoring in Western, aged-based perspectives on childhood, their assumption of universal norms for children and child-rearing, and their general lack of cultural and contextual relativism.

As enshrined in the CRC (1989), all human beings under the age of 18 years are considered to be children, and thus vulnerable and in need of specific protection. This conception of a universal, vulnerable child is based on early Western research in child development, where childhood is considered to be the period of growth “in which the individual, in both the physical and moral sense, does not yet exist” (Durkheim 1992 [1911], p. 147) and in which the child is completely dependent upon adult caregivers (Freud and Burlingham 1943). According to this child development model, childhood is a time of preparation for adulthood, marked by children’s passage through predetermined stages towards the acquisition of rational and logical adult competencies (Erikson 1950). The ‘generic’ child (Mann 2004) embodied by this universalised perspective requires constant protection, nurturing and preparation for adulthood. Although such a conception of childhood is a Western social construct which only emerged during the Industrial Revolution as part of a specific socio-economic trajectory (Ariès 1962), child protection actors rarely acknowledge that such perspectives on childhood may be irrelevant in contexts where the child protection regime is active.

Opposing this construct of the universalised child, sociologists of childhood adopt a more dynamic perspective, arguing that childhood is “an actively negotiated set of social relationships within which the early years of human life are constituted” (Prout and James 1997, p. 7). Similarly, anthropologists studying childhood emphasise the differences between cultures and traditions, where “ideas about what activities are appropriate for children at what ages and stages vary greatly” (Schafer 2004, p. 101). From this perspective, factors including physical maturity, social expectations, family responsibilities, economic means and gender roles are considered to be more relevant to conceptions of childhood than definitions based on age (Mawson 2004).

The criticism levied on the international child protection regime for its reliance on a universalised notion of childhood merges with the critique of the ‘false universality’ of international human rights and humanitarian discourse more generally (Žižek 2011). Such a critique can be applied to the wider neo-liberal rights-based framework in which the child protection regime is embedded, a framework which promotes the notion of a “universal morality beyond state borders” (Pupavac 2001, p. 96). As maintained by Pupavac, one of the fundamental problems of the neo-liberal rights-based approach to child protection is its expression of “paternalism towards whole populations who are deemed incapable of determining their own lives and values without outside intervention” (ibid., p. 101). Such attitudes are evident in the way that the child rights discourse is promoted in many conflict-affected contexts. From general awareness-raising on the CRC, to pressing for the end of child labour, to the demobilisation of children from armed groups, international child protection advocacy efforts implicitly assume that such “societies have erred and must be corrected; their knowledge was poor and must be supplemented; their attitude to children was backward and requires updating” (Macmillan 2009, p. 46).

The moral claims and denunciations which are favoured by the international child protection regime represent efforts to ascribe blame without analysing the complexity of the issues or contextualising them within the social and political economy. Such morally-grounded approaches tend to ignore the complex social, political, economic and historical nexus which leads to the non-realisation of human

rights in the first place. Significant efforts are made in proclaiming that specific rights must be fulfilled while the causal factors of these rights being violated remain unaddressed. For example, international child protection efforts are more frequently directed at denouncing child labour or the recruitment to armed groups rather than towards addressing the socio-economic constraints and lack of other viable livelihood options which lead families to send their children to work or young people to join armed groups in the first place.

Like international rights-based approaches in general, the largely aspirational nature of the child rights framework espoused by the child protection regime represents another of its key weaknesses. In asserting the primordial nature of children's rights, child protection discourse is starkly disconnected from the realities of entrenched poverty and weak government which are especially relevant in contexts affected by violent conflict. Absolutist discourses about 'inalienable rights' are advanced by child protection actors, yet, as described elsewhere with regard to aid approaches more broadly, "the same words are used to describe something that happens, something that should happen, and something that does not happen" (Marriage 2006, p. v). Although there may be merit in holding standards towards which states may aspire, the space between that which is enshrined in international conventions and protocols- e.g. children's "full and harmonious development" in "peace" and "dignity" (CRC, Preamble)- and the realities actually lived by young people on a daily basis questions the relevance of such an approach. This cognitive dissonance between discourse and reality (Marriage 2006, cited Festinger 1962) often results in the avoidance, denial or obscuration of the causes of child rights violations, a theme which will be examined in greater detail below.

The international child protection regime gives little attention to the stark contradiction which separates idealised precepts from young people's actual experiences (Seymour 2012b). Rather than attempting to address the deeper, structural and political causes of violence and abuse affecting children, child protection interventions instead offer short-term and palliative support. In their research with young people in Palestine, Hart and Lo Forte (2010) highlight such disconnect with reality when they explain how the psychosocial projects which are favoured by many child protection actors in the occupied territories end up losing their relevance in a much more complex political environment where:

... children continue to be beaten up by settlers on their way to school, to be denied access to water sources even within their own communities, to have their environment polluted by waste dumped by settlements, to be prevented from moving freely in order to access services or to visit friends and family, to have their homes invaded by the Israeli army in the middle of the night, and to be arrested, tried and imprisoned in ways that confound international law. (Hart and Lo Forte 2010, p. 2)

The disconnect between child protection approaches and the actual protection needs faced by young people is striking. While loudly proclaiming the values of universal child rights, the underlying political causes of the violations remain unaddressed, thus allowing the structures of violence- so prevalent as to be unseen⁸⁷- to be maintained.

⁸⁷ Recalling Galtung's (1969) conception of 'invisible' structural violence, as discussed in Chapter 1.

A final critique of the international child protection regime considered here is its treatment of children as rights-holders while at the same time denying their agency in the realisation of these rights (Pupavac 2001). Despite token proscriptions of full participation of children enshrined in the CRC (Article 12)- which “assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child”- young people’s capacity to act on their own behalf tends to be ignored by the international child protection regime, a regime which justifies its own existence on the assumption that children are weak, vulnerable and unable to participate in their own protection. Institutionalising the image of “physical vulnerability and of irrationality that necessitates children’s dependence on adults” (Macmillan 2009, p. 38), the child protection regime is therefore able to sustain itself through the portrayal of children as innocent, dependent and helpless (Hart 2006).

By not questioning the conditions which lead to children’s vulnerability in contexts where the international child protection regime intervenes, the policies developed and practices implemented are often inadequate or inappropriate (Boyden and Mann 2005). Categories of vulnerability are developed in order to respond to the needs of selected young people who are considered to be the ‘most vulnerable’; yet such definitions are usually imposed by external child protection actors and based on perceptions of presumed vulnerability. As shown elsewhere, the effort to target the ‘most vulnerable’ for the provision of aid and services can often have no effect- or even a negative effect- when the conditions of adversity are generalised and where most people experience similar levels of deprivation (Marriage 2006).⁸⁸ As will be discussed in greater detail below, linking categories of vulnerability with the provision of material support also contributes to reinforcing young people’s weakness by valorising their victimhood and dependence (Seymour 2012a).⁸⁹

A CRITIQUE OF CHILD PROTECTION INTERVENTIONS IN THE KIVUS

The critiques of the international child protection regime overviewed above are equally relevant in the context of eastern DRC, a place where the international humanitarian aid system has been active since the mid-1990s. In the Kivus, the universalising discourses which dominate international child protection interventions reveal the cognitive dissonance between the rights-based framework and the actual structures of violence which proscribe young people’s lived experience (Seymour 2011b, Seymour 2012b). Generic interventions are elaborated in response to perceived needs which are based on universalised, Western-based notions of childhood without being contextualised to the specific political, social and economic reality of life in eastern DRC. Vulnerability is assumed to be the dominant characteristic of young people, while externally- and generically-imposed interventions rarely consider young people’s actual needs and capacities for effectively surviving within the constraints of poverty and uncertainty. Building on these critiques, this section now presents data

⁸⁸ The risks associated with valorising young people’s weakness is a point which has been taken up in the psychological research relating to child welfare systems in North America. Ungar (2005, p. 435) critiques how even in relatively developed governmental contexts, child protection services are provided to young people who are considered to be “non-resilient, who carry with them labels that define them as clients of each system (dangerous, delinquent, deviant, disordered and disadvantaged)...” This vulnerability-focused approach ends up distorting young people’s coping capacities by reinforcing their weakness rather than their capacities for positive adaptation.

⁸⁹ A research project I conducted on behalf of War Child Holland in South Kivu in 2009-2010 illustrates this point: my task was to document and analyse local conceptions of vulnerability to support eventual elaboration of a ‘vulnerability criteria’ list for selecting project beneficiaries. During our consultations with research participants in rural South Kivu, my research assistant struggled to translate the French word *vulnérabilité* to an appropriate word in Mashi, the local language; according to him, the concept of vulnerability had only been introduced recently. In our interviews and discussions, he either used the French term *vulnérabilité* (which everyone understood) or the Mashi approximation of ‘weak.’

collected in the Kivus to illustrate three further weaknesses of international child protection interventions, specifically: the problem of selectively responding to only certain forms of violence and not others, the irrelevance of child protection responses in responding to young people's actual needs within the structures of violence, and the valorisation of vulnerability.

SELECTIVE PROTECTION

Rather than addressing the profound structural violences affecting the lives of young people, international child protection interventions in the Kivus tend to focus only on extreme and overt—i.e. 'subjective' (Žižek 2009)—expressions of violence. An example of such selectivity is evidenced in the mechanism for monitoring, documenting and denouncing grave child rights violations, one of the dominant activities of the international child protection regime in the DRC. The Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) was established by the UN in 2005 to document abuses against children, including killing, abduction, recruitment or rape as committed by armed groups.⁹⁰ Regular reports of these abuses are compiled by child protection actors at the provincial level, sent to Kinshasa, and then on to New York, where they are used in denouncement and advocacy efforts at the national and international level.

A few extracts from the 2010 *Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo* (United Nations 2010, p. 5- 8), illustrate the kinds of violations which are reported and the ways in which they are presented at the international level:

... In total, 1,593 cases of child recruitment (1,519 boys and 74 girls) were documented during the reporting period, including 1,235 in 2009. This represents a slight decrease compared with the whole of 2008, for which 1,522 recruitments were documented. Out of the total number of child recruitments documented during the reporting period, 42 per cent were allegedly carried out by FARDC, 26 per cent by various Mai-Mai groups, 16 per cent by PARECO⁹¹, 10 per cent by the different FDLR factions and 6 per cent by CNDP...

... During the reporting period, an increase in the number of killings and maimings of children was registered, mainly in zones of active military operations. A total of 54 killings and 22 cases of maiming were documented during the reporting period. The number of killings tripled and the number of maimings doubled in 2009 compared with 2008. The victims (47 boys and 29 girls) came from all age groups...

... During the reporting period, widespread sexual violence remained a grave concern countrywide, in particular in provinces affected by armed conflict. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) reported a total of 12,838 cases of sexual violence (against adults and children) in the Kivus and Oriental Province, half of which (6,379) were allegedly perpetrated by armed elements... Of this total, 4,572 cases (35.6 per cent) were reportedly committed against children: 1,472 cases in Oriental Province, 2,063 in North Kivu and 1,037

⁹⁰ The MRM was mandated by UN Security Council Resolution 1612 (2005) to monitor and report on six grave violations of children's rights in conflict-affected contexts: killing or maiming; recruiting or using child soldiers; attacks against schools or hospitals; rape or other grave sexual violence; abduction; and denial of humanitarian access (United Nations Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, n.d.). The MRM is implemented by child protection actors who are mandated to be part of the 'MRM Taskforce'; in the DRC this includes the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (currently MONUSCO) through its Child Protection Section, UNICEF, international NGO actors, and a range of local NGO actors who implement child protection projects at the local level and who serve as the primary source for the information which is reported.

⁹¹ The Patriotes Résistants Congolais (PARECO) are a Mayi-mayi coalition group which emerged in the Kivus in 2007.

in South Kivu. Among child victims, 13.3 per cent were reportedly younger than the age of 10...

These reports lack analysis of the political and historical roots of the violence and are not helpful for increasing understanding or addressing the causes of the violence. By enumerating acts of violence instead of analysing them, the dangers of this kind of documentation have been elsewhere highlighted by Keen (1997, p. 68), who demonstrates how “‘catalogues of human rights abuses’ have sometimes added to the impression of mindless violence by emphasizing condemnation at the expense of explanation”. The structural violences associated with poverty and lack of basic services which deny the realisation of people’s most basic human rights- even though enshrined in the CRC- are not even mentioned, let alone explained, despite the fact that these same conditions of poverty and lack of other livelihood means are an essential part of the dynamic leading to such violations of basic rights in the first place. Once again exemplifying the cognitive dissonance which permeates international humanitarian aid responses, monitoring and reporting of grave violations of children’s rights is considered as a ‘protection’ activity, despite the fact that young people are not actually being protected from such violations. Contrary to what the child protection regime presumes, the MRM and other human rights monitoring mechanisms serve to provide numerical accounts of violence rather than to actually protect young people.

In the Kivus, the international child protection regime’s focus on only selected and disaggregated expressions of violence serves to obscure the other violences experienced on a daily basis by young people. These experiences equally affect young people’s well-being yet are almost never documented in human rights monitoring reports. As the following three narratives demonstrate, certain kinds of violence affecting young people in the Kivus remain unheard in the international child protection discourse, thus leaving the economic, social and gendered conditions leading to these violences unchanged.

The first narrative was offered by M-, a research participant who was actively involved in this project and who was 20 years old when I first met her. Following the death of both of her parents during the war, she had been living with her relatives in Bukavu. During one of our meetings, she shared an experience which had occurred several weeks previously and which continued to trouble her:

The other day an old man in my neighbourhood came to my house. He told me that there was a white man he knew who was looking for a domestic worker. He was willing to help me by introducing me to this man. If I got the job, I would be paid US\$100 a month. I couldn’t believe my good fortune. Finally I would have a chance to work.

The next day, I went to meet the white man, and he agreed that I could begin working for him the following Monday. I was so happy. I’d be able to continue studying. I could help my younger brothers and sisters with their school fees. I could contribute to buying food and things for our family.

When I got home from the meeting, the old man came to talk to me. He said that I’d gotten the job because of him, so now I had to have sex with him. I refused. He insisted. I refused again.

I showed up for my new job the next Monday, but the white man told he couldn’t hire me anymore. He’d been told by the old man that I was a thief and couldn’t be trusted. So I went

home. I couldn't tell my aunt and uncle- I didn't want to create problems for them in the neighbourhood. That old man has 10 children. I see him every day, but I don't acknowledge him. There's nothing for me to say. (Interview, Bukavu, April 2010)

Having briefly nurtured a dream for an improvement in her life conditions, M- was left feeling resigned to her situation and to her belief that the conditions of poverty in which she lived would probably never change. The structural violence of chronic poverty, the lack of available employment opportunities for young women, and the position of women in Congolese society more generally left M- in a situation where she would remain at risk of abuse with few means of protection.

The narrative of another research participant provides further evidence of the ways in which the structural violences of poverty increase young people's risk of exposure to abuse. Like M-, this 18-year-old woman was also an orphan of both parents and had similarly hoped to support herself through domestic work:

I used to live with my mother's stepmother in Kigali, but when my mother died, my grandmother chased me out of the house.

As a child I had been told that my father was a Congolese man from Goma, so I came here to look for him. I never found him, but I did meet a woman who agreed to take me in. I lived well in her house for a while, helping with the children, cooking, taking care of things.

But then the father of the house started approaching me, telling me I had to have relations with him. I used to sleep on the couch in the living room, and early one morning, on 18 April 2009, he came to me and forced me to have sex with him. I wanted to cry out, but I knew I would be chased from the house if I did, so I stayed quiet. This skirt that I'm wearing today is the same one I was wearing that day.

After a few months, I realised that I was pregnant. I didn't know what to do. I confided in my neighbour, and she confronted the father of the house. He came to me and threatened me. He denied he had done anything, and that if I tried to report him he would throw me out of the house. I kept hoping that he might understand, that he might help me to find a solution. But he didn't.

Once my host mother realised I was pregnant, she and my host father chased me out of the house, shouting at me, accusing me of being a prostitute. I slept on the street outside the house for many days, I had nowhere else to go, but the family refused to let me come back in. (interview conducted on behalf of War Child UK, Goma, July 2010)⁹²

This young woman was eventually able to gain access to child protection support services; when I met her in 2010, she was temporarily living in a residential care programme supported by War Child UK and being trained in tailoring with the hope of eventually becoming employed.⁹³ She was receiving food and medical treatment as well as support in raising her child, while another NGO was providing her with the legal support to bring the man who had abused her to justice. Yet, despite receiving all of this external support, she felt that her prospects for the future remained bleak:

⁹² This narrative is also cited in War Child UK (2010, p. 27- 28).

⁹³ The dominant approach still used the international child protection actors for skills training- for example teaching people to tailor clothes- rarely responds to market demands, is generally poorly implemented, and in only a small minority of cases might such a training eventually lead one towards earning a viable livelihood. See Seymour (2012a) for a discussion of the same issue in the context of Burundi.

Sometimes thinking about this is too much for me. Sometimes I'm afraid I'll go crazy. My mother's family in Rwanda doesn't want me. I don't know my father. I have this child I can't even take care of. Without this child maybe I could manage, but with it, no one will ever take me in...

The conditions of structural violence would continue to affect this young woman long after the NGO project funding ran out, a situation of which she was perfectly aware. Although she could be considered one of the fortunate young people to gain support from the international child protection regime, few of the conditions of her life had changed. Without a family support network around her, her future would be as filled with risks as had been her past. She would remain vulnerable to abuse based in the structures of violence for which the international child protection regime might offer short-term responses but no sustainable means of protection.

The third narrative was shared by another one of my female research participants living in Goma. Showing how the conditions of poverty and loss of social support can lead to even greater difficulties, this young woman's narrative again serves as testimony to how far removed the international child protection regime is from some young people's lived realities. A young sex worker, she described the kinds of violence she might be subjected to on any given night:

Sometimes we're beaten by soldiers; sometimes they rape us. If they find us in the streets, they'll search us for money, touching our whole bodies. If they don't find any, they beat us. Soldiers usually come to the bar late at night, and the manager puts pressure on us to have sex with them. If we refuse, they take us to a place 17km from here, rape us and leave us there. What else can we do but accept to have sex with them? They make promises, tell us they'll take us away from here. But it never happens. Besides the beatings, mostly we're afraid of getting infections from them.

The civilian clients are the worst; they're well-dressed, they look respectable, but actually they are the most violent. See these scars on my neck? They come from a time when a man took me to his place and tried to make me have oral sex. I didn't want to and he beat me with so much force. A while ago my friend had a plastic bag forced inside her vagina, and the man set fire to it.

We can't report these abuses, if we go to the police they'll demand at least \$20. If we cry out for help, we're accused by those who hear us: "She's found what she was looking for". What's the use in telling these stories? It's just what we live each day. (interview conducted on behalf of War Child UK, Goma, July 2010)⁹⁴

This young woman is unlikely to be protected from her subjection to overt physical violence, in part because at social and cultural levels she is considered to be responsible for having 'chosen' to become a sex worker. Yet within the structures of violence dominating everyday life in the Kivus, many young people- girls especially- are left with few alternatives but to adopt coping mechanisms which increase the risks they confront as they try to ensure their own survival. As was discussed in Chapter 4, transactional sex as an expression of coping demonstrates both young people's tactical efforts to navigate the structures of violence as well as the risks associated with such tactics. Like so many young people in the Kivus today, this young woman's inability to access protection support

⁹⁴ This narrative is also quoted in War Child UK (2010, p. 31).

demonstrates how far removed international child protection interventions are from the far more complex and constrained experiences of everyday life within the structures of violence.

While knowledge of the kinds of abuses evident in the narratives above is widespread, these violences are not acknowledged in international child protection discourse, nor- in general- are protection responses elaborated in response to prevent such abuses. In the exceptional cases when child protection actors attempt to respond to these kinds of violence,⁹⁵ such approaches can only superficially respond to concerns which are deeply rooted in the structures of violence, including the absence of state services, the conditions of poverty, and the breakdown of social support which have been described in the chapters above. The lack of the international child protection regime's engagement with the structures of violence is part of the dynamic which contributes to strengthening these structures, a point which will be elaborated in the final section below.

IRRELEVANCE OF INTERVENTIONS: THE EXAMPLE OF CHILDREN'S DDR

International child protection interventions which do receive systematic support in contexts of violent conflict nevertheless tend to offer only palliative responses to problems which are deeply rooted in the structures of violence. Irrelevant in responding to the structural causes of abuse, they do little to change the conditions or to have a long-term impact on the situation of young people. A prominent example of this irrelevance is the international response to the association of children with armed groups. At the global level, the international child protection regime considers the recruitment and use of children by armed groups to be a grave human rights violation.⁹⁶ Child protection actors decry the involvement of children in war, a practice which seems to desecrate established Western conceptions of childhood innocence even as recent European and North American military history is disregarded (Rosen 2005). The now-popularised image of a child serving on the front lines of a violent conflict and perpetrating terrifying acts of violence is common in international media. It also serves as an emotive tool for mobilising public attention and donor funding (Seymour 2011c).⁹⁷

The disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) of children is one of the longest-implemented child protection interventions in the DRC- with the first DDR programme having begun in 1998 (UNICEF 2009b). Described simply, the DDR approach is primarily a logistical exercise which physically removes young people from the armed group, places them in transitional care where they receive basic social support, then returns them home, usually with some short-term educational or livelihood follow-up support.⁹⁸ According to UN estimates, more than 33,000 children have been recruited and used by armed groups in the DRC since 1996, with UNICEF claiming to have supported

⁹⁵ For example, War Child UK included young sex workers in their project.

⁹⁶ The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court codifies the use and recruitment of children under the age of 15 years as a war crime, while the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (United Nations 2000) restricts the involvement in armed groups of anyone under the age of 18 years.

⁹⁷ Reporting on child recruitment also builds on the often implicit perspective of the barbarism of contemporary war in sub-Saharan Africa (Macmillan 2009). For example, one UNICEF report describes how, following his enrolment in an armed group, a "14-year-old boy whose name means 'innocent' in Swahili... was forced to commit acts of sexual violence against women" (UNICEF 2009b), also quoted in Seymour (2011c, p. 57).

⁹⁸ The children's DDR approach in the DRC involves the identification of young people suspected of being under the age of 18 years, some form of advocacy or pressure on their commanders to ensure their release, then a period of demobilisation of several months or longer in a transit centre or with a host family where the child readapts to 'civilian' life. The child is then reunified with his or her family and reintegration support begins, support which should include the provision of vocational training, formal education or an income-generating activity. Once the child has passed through these phases of the process, the child is considered to be successfully 'reintegrated'.

31,200 children through the DDR process since then (Seymour 2011a, 2011c).⁹⁹ The child protection regime considers these numbers to serve as evidence of the success of their approach, yet such numbers again serve to exemplify how child protection actors focus on accounting rather than relevant analysis. Rarely is there questioning about the conditions which lead to young people's recruitment, or, as is often the case in the Kivus, re-recruitment to the armed groups whenever there is a large scale mobilisation. Little is problematized about the fact that for ten years international child protection actors have relied on the same approach, even as young people continue to mobilise or re-mobilise in the iterative cycles of violence.

Looking at the contemporary history of child recruitment in the Kivus, Prunier (2009, p. 251) explains how Laurent Kabila and the AFDL first recruited young men in large numbers at the beginning of the war in 1996:

young local boys... came in droves: massive rural poverty, lack of schooling opportunities, boredom, disgust with Mobutu's decaying rule, all combined to give him in a few months an army of 10,000 to 15,000 *kadogo* ("little ones"). They ranged in age from ten to twenty, with a median age of around fifteen. Many were orphans, their parents having died either from diseases or in the Kivus ethnic wars that had been endemic for the past three years. They looked up to the revolutionary leader as a charismatic father-like figure.

Prunier's analysis on young people's recruitment to the armed groups remained relevant at the time that I worked as a child protection actor in the Kivus.¹⁰⁰ Of the approximately 300 interviews I conducted with young men demobilised from armed groups between 2006 and 2007, a significant proportion of them reported having joined voluntarily.¹⁰¹ I was subsequently able to systematise this information in 2009, when, during a documentary review of 1,988 cases of child recruitment in North Kivu, I found that a total of 928 (46.7%) cases were designated by the children themselves to have been voluntary.¹⁰² Considering recruitment as a choice starkly contrasts with the international child protection regime's discourse of helplessness and vulnerability, a discourse in which young people are victims of the violent recruitment drives. While notions of 'voluntary' are of course problematic in the context of constrained choice prevailing in the Kivus, there is clearly a significant cognitive dissonance between the child protection regime's discourse on child recruitment and the reality of why children join armed groups in the first place. According to the young people I interviewed, their reasons for joining the armed groups usually related to the structural violences of poverty, unemployment and lack of schooling (based on interviews I conducted with young people

⁹⁹ By 2009, UNICEF reported that it had supported the demobilisation of an estimated 31,200 children since the first DDR programme began in 1999 (Integrated Regional Information Networks 2009, see also UNICEF 2009a).

¹⁰⁰ The involvement of children in armed groups can be considered from a different historical perspective: Hochschild (1998, p. 34) describes King Leopold's early military career as follows: "From the age of ten on, he was given military training; by fifteen, he held the rank of lieutenant in the Belgian Army, at sixteen captain, at eighteen major, at nineteen colonel, and by the time he was twenty he was a major general."

¹⁰¹ That many young people exercise their capacity for self-protection by joining an armed group should not be taken as a generalisation that all young people voluntarily join armed groups. Certainly in the Kivus there has been a long and parallel history of violent and often brutal recruitment to armed groups against the will of young people, a phenomenon which is not specifically treated in this thesis.

¹⁰² I conducted this review on behalf of the UN Group of Experts in the DRC, where my task was to support investigations of grave human rights violations, including child recruitment. The forms which I reviewed were the standardised DDR forms of the government-led *Unité d'Execution du Programme National DDR*. These forms provide spaces to document extensive information relevant to each child and to their recruitment experience, for example: the date and place of recruitment, by which commander to which group, levels of military training received and areas of deployment. One question on these forms is whether the child was 'voluntarily' or 'forcibly' recruited. This data is also cited in Seymour (2011c, p. 59).

2006 -2007 and 2009 on behalf of the UN as well as during my doctoral fieldwork in 2010 and 2011; this data is also documented in Seymour 2011b).¹⁰³

The dominant discourse on child recruitment includes the assumption that children who have been associated with armed groups have been traumatised by their experiences. Contrary to this assumption, my work with young people in the Kivus showed that many of those who had joined an armed group expressed a stronger capacity for self-protection than other young people who had never enrolled in an armed group (based on interviews I conducted with young people 2006 -2007 and 2009 on behalf of the UN as well as during my doctoral fieldwork in 2010 and 2011). Those young people demonstrated an astute capacity of discerning when mobilisation might offer the best possible – or the least-worst- outcome.¹⁰⁴ For example, one of my research participants explained how he had been recruited to the Mayi-mayi:

One Sunday- it was either in December 1998 or January 1999- I was in church. The Mayi-mayi came to recruit us. Before then, I had already considered joining. Life was so difficult, we were forced to transport for the different armed groups, we were beaten by soldiers. There was always so much suffering. I thought that maybe life with the Mayi-mayi would be better. (interview, Bunyakiri, May 2010)

A young woman who I interviewed in Goma had left the FARDC after having served for approximately five years. Even though she had gone through the children's DDR programme, she regretted her decision to demobilise, explaining:

Now that we're out of the army, we're unable to get enough work to support ourselves and our children. Our friends who stayed in the army, at least they receive a salary at the end of the month. They have access to food and protection from their husbands. Military lifestyle was a kind of protection for us. (focus group discussion conducted on behalf of War Child UK, Goma, July 2010)¹⁰⁵

While joining the military represents a tactical choice among young people living in social and economic conditions which offer them few better alternatives, mobilisation is not conceived as such by the international child protection regime. As has been documented in other contexts of political violence, young people's mobilisation "has come to be seen purely in terms of violation rather than as an instance of participation or the exercise of agency" (Hart 2008, p. 279- 280). Rather than acknowledging the choices made by young people within the complex and interacting structures of violence, child protection actors intervene in accordance with internationally-established legal frameworks and in line with standardised procedures developed according to externally-imposed conceptions. With the child protection discourse focused on young people's vulnerability to recruitment, the structural reasons for young people's mobilisation remain obscured.

My critique of the international child protection regime's approach is grounded in my own experience representing this very regime. As a child protection actor in the Kivus between the years

¹⁰³ The weighted choice calculus facing young people is determined by the structures of violence, as was evident in an explanation offered to me by a 15-year-old girl who described her decision to join the Mayi-mayi: "When the CNDP and the Mayi-mayi finally reached my village, I knew I would be raped by soldiers on both sides. So I decided to join the Mayi-mayi hoping that I'd be raped less" (interview conducted on behalf of the UN Group of Experts, Goma, April 2009). Also quoted in Seymour (2012b, p. 377).

¹⁰⁴ The notions of bounded rationality (Simon 1957) and 'satisficing' are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4 above.

¹⁰⁵ This narrative is also quoted in War Child UK (2010, p. 31) and Seymour (2012b, p. 377).

2006- 2009, I was actively involved in the children's DDR process and believed deeply that this work was ensuring the protection of young people's 'best interests' (CRC, Article 3). Over time I came to another appreciation of this work, eventually understanding the irrelevance of- and at times greater harm caused by- the child protection regime in the Kivus. One experience was particularly instructive: In 2007, while part of UN efforts to separate children from the then-newly integrated FARDC brigades in Katale, North Kivu, we identified and verified the presence of a 17-year-old serving as a body guard for the battalion commander. During my interview with this young man, he explained how he had joined the CNDP following the killing of his parents during a Mayi-mayi raid several years earlier. This event had developed in him a strong belief in the political ideology of the CNDP and, as well as his desire to honour the memory of his parents, he was fighting to advance the 'cause' of the Tutsi Congolese population.

When we explained to this young man that, as a child, he was not authorised to be enrolled in the military and would thus be demobilised, he immediately stood up and walked away in angry refusal. Brandishing my child rights discourse- reinforced by the pre-trial hearings of Thomas Lubanga which were underway at the International Criminal Court at the time- I discussed the situation at length with his commander. Eventually I was able to convince the commander to hand over the young man. The young man's protestations grew louder, but he was ordered to follow us. In tears, shorn of his military fatigues and humiliated, the young man climbed into the UN truck with the other young people we had separated from the battalion that day. Once in Goma, a city he had never even visited, he was placed in the children's DDR transit centre that was run by a local NGO with the support of international donor funding. Far from his commander and his Masisi home, this young ethnic Tutsi was placed among a group of non-Rwandophone young men. With all of them deeply steeped in the contentious identity politics of the time, this young man was miserable and unable to adapt. Within days, he managed to escape from the centre and was never heard from again.¹⁰⁶

Although I cannot know the outcome of this young man's story, I hope that he would have made it safely back to Masisi. I can imagine him having found his way back to his commander, his only living father figure. His commander was a CNDP leader who was subsequently elevated within the FARDC ranks and who, consequently, had new access to significant material resources. Within the militarised patronage structures of the Kivus, this commander would most likely provide those close to him- perhaps even this young man- with a decent quality of life, at least when compared to the majority of people surviving within the structures of violence in the Kivus. In no way intending to defend or promote young people's enrolment in armed groups in the Kivus, this example instead serves to highlight the great distance which continues to exist between well-intentioned child protection responses and young people's actual possibilities for effectively coping within the highly militarised context of the Kivus.

According to the interviews I conducted over the years, young people's experiences of being in an armed group varied greatly depending on which armed group they had joined, which geographical area they were in, their own ethnic identity and the dominant identity of the armed group, as well as during which period of the conflict they were active. Reflecting a similar diversity of perspectives, the young people who I interviewed between 2006 and 2009 showed a significant variance in their reasons for having mobilised. Although these are only generalisations, Mayi-mayi mobilisation was

¹⁰⁶ This case is also discussed in Seymour (2011a).

often based on local narratives relating to protection from foreign, usually Rwandan, forces; young people would join the Mayi-mayi to support a collective idea, often with their peers or family members, would receive little training and would generally remain at home rather than move to distant military positions. For young people associated with the CNDP, their mobilisation was far more formal, included military training and ideological studies; the kind of experiences they had while mobilised depended heavily on if they were Tutsi, Hutu, or non-Rwandophone, with young people of Tutsi identity reporting to have had the most positive experience and young people of non-Rwandophone identity reporting the most negative experiences. The comparatively fewer young people who I interviewed who had voluntarily joined the FDLR often cited their motivation for mobilisation as part of their search for improved material life conditions: “I joined the FDLR because they hunt in the jungle and eat meat more often than we did in the village” (interview conducted on behalf of the UN, Goma, April 2009).¹⁰⁷

A more in-depth account of the complex and shifting experiences of young people’s mobilisation during the wars was provided by C-, one of my key doctoral research participants. His narrative, documented in May 2010,¹⁰⁸ recounts his experiences while associated with various armed groups during the war, including the AFDL, the RCD and the Mayi-mayi. He was first recruited to the AFDL in 1996 when he was seven years old:

In 1996 the war came to [my town]. My family fled to Bukavu, where we stayed for three months. When we returned [home], we didn't know who was in charge, though Mzee [Laurent] Kabila was leading recruitment efforts. I was forced to join the AFDL with all the other boys I grew up with. We were taken to the Plains of Ruzizi and trained for five months in how to use guns. After the training we were given arms and uniforms and started fighting.

C- recounted his early years matter-of-factly. In his memory, he was doing what all the other boys of his neighbourhood were doing at a time of active conflict. He considered his early military training as unexceptional, something he and his peers became involved in mostly by circumstance. After a couple of years of involvement however, C- began to conceive differently of the violence in which he was participating:

By the time Mzee Kabila took Kinshasa, my battalion had returned to [the base near the airport]. When the RCD entered Bukavu in 1998, they took over our base and killed all but six of the AFDL officers. The soldiers who remained were forced to carry the bodies ... to be burnt with benzene. These soldiers were then shot and killed. Other soldiers who had gone to the police seeking refuge were also shot and killed.

Six of us managed to survive and we escaped. Two of us hid with our commander. Two weeks later Bukavu was taken by the RCD, so we began our journey on foot to Goma, where we stayed with the family of our commander. He negotiated for us to be integrated into the RCD.

Once again contrary to the dominant portrayal maintained by the international child protection regime of the reprehensible military commander violating children’s rights, C- remembered his commander with fondness. In a context of active combat, his commander served as his protector, as

¹⁰⁷ Also cited in Seymour (2012b, p. 377).

¹⁰⁸ This narrative has also been used in Seymour (2011c, p. 60- 61).

the one who assured his safety and provided him with shelter and food during their escape from the advancing RCD forces. It was because of his commander that C- was safely transferred to the RCD and not killed like many of his AFDL colleagues.

As C- remained mobilised in the new phase of AFDL- RCD violence, the meaning of his participation again changed. He explained how his engagement with the conflict suddenly became deeply personal for him:

One day I was given some leave to visit home. Once there I went to visit my grandfather in the nearby village. When I returned home late that day, I found that the RCD had surrounded my house. They were accusing people of being Mayi-Mayi sympathisers. I saw my father as he was being beaten by the soldiers. He was beaten to death.

While he was unable to stop the killing of his father by members of the same armed group to which he belonged, C- could actively choose his next course of action: "To take vengeance for my father's death, I decided to leave the RCD and to join the Mayi-Mayi."

C- then described how, in 2002, he had been identified by an international NGO and entered the DDR process for children. The assistance he received was not especially relevant or memorable to him and, as the conflict continued in South Kivu, he eventually re-joined the Mayi-Mayi and returned to the front line. He remained active until 2004: "I participated in the war in 2004 when the RCD and Mutebusi attacked Bukavu. We managed to chase Mutebusi back into Rwanda." In South Kivu, the routing of the RCD commander Jules Mutebusi from Bukavu in 2004 is an event which remains strongly etched in popular narratives, and C- expressed a significant sense of pride in having been a part of this effort. Even more crucially for C-, his involvement in the victory against the RCD forces allowed him to avenge the death of his father, a fact which has since helped him in emotionally dealing with his loss. Clearly far removed from C-'s experience with armed groups in the Kivus, the standardised DDR responses developed and implemented by child protection actors were irrelevant to him.

Another one of my research participants, J-, narrated his experience with the children's DDR programme. Although ostensibly a 'beneficiary' of children's DDR in the Kivus, J- also explained how the support he had received from a child protection NGO had done nothing to help him meet his everyday survival needs. Formerly associated with the FDLR, J- had gone through the children's DDR process in 2006. He had been enrolled in a skills training programme that was designed to help him earn a viable livelihood and 'reintegrate' back into civilian life. When I met J- in 2010, he was 20 years old and struggling to survive each day:

Before the war, I was a student... I had to stop studying in 2002, after my third year. We didn't have any money, and I was responsible for taking care of my brothers. When the war came here, we were displaced to Walungu, where eventually I was taken by the FDLR. I stayed with them until 2006. There was so much suffering in those years, but I was quiet because that's life...

Once I got out of the army, I went to [a local child protection NGO] for demobilisation and reintegration. They gave me training and they promised me a job. But they lied- I never got a job because of them. I got my certificate, but what good is a piece of paper?

I dreamt that at this age I would be doing something different, that I would be able to care for my brothers, but I can't. My parents left during the war. After my father was chased away from our land in Mushinga by the FDLR, he went to Maniema to look for gold and we haven't heard from him since. My mother is a merchant in the gold mines in Mushinga. She prays for me every day that I may find a job... A job is the most important thing for me.

Life is difficult now, but it's nowhere as difficult as it was during the war. Then I had to sleep among cadavers. It was a test. Today is easy in comparison... (Interview, Bukavu, April 2010)

Despite being a 'beneficiary' of the children's DDR process, J- bitterly noted the irrelevance of the support provided by the child protection actors implementing the DDR programme. For him, the only thing he received from the international child protection regime was a certificate that was not useful to him in earning a livelihood as he had been promised.¹⁰⁹ Exemplifying what Duffield (2005) has advanced in his critique of the biopolitics of international development aid, young people going through the DDR process in the DRC are given a certificate which is meant to 'insure' them for the future, even though not even the most basic welfare services exist in the DRC which would be needed to meet young people's broader economic and welfare needs. In this way, the international child protection regime expects young people to be 'self-reliant' (ibid., p. 145), incongruously attributing a distorted form of agency which does little to actually support young people's self-reliance, much less strengthen their abilities to cope effectively.

These examples of young people's experience of the DDR process in the Kivus support an argument against standardised approaches. By juxtaposing the complexity of the phenomenon of child recruitment with the simplistic responses offered by international child protection actors, this discussion highlights how ill-adapted and irrelevant child protection interventions can be. The continuing implementation of inappropriate child protection responses might be explained by a general lack of knowledge of the context, or by limitations in logistical capacity, time or funding. Yet the most fundamental problem of child protection actors in the Kivus is that they are responding to the symptoms of violence without engaging with its structures. Consequently, irrelevant responses continue to be offered. This critique applies to international humanitarian aid interventions in the Kivus more generally, a theme which will be discussed in greater detail in the final section of this chapter.

VALORISATION OF VULNERABILITY AND REINFORCING WEAKNESS

As described above, the assumption of children and young people's vulnerability lays the foundation of international child protection interventions and serves to justify the very existence of the child protection regime. In the DRC there are specific interventions for pre-determined categories of children considered to be *a priori* vulnerable, such as children associated with armed groups or victims of militarised sexual violence. Assumptions of vulnerability are imposed on young people, with generically elaborated interventions which usually ignore the individual situation of the young person and the structures of violence in which they live.

¹⁰⁹ The failure of children's reintegration programme in Burundi is explored in depth in Seymour 2012b, a study which highlights many of the same weaknesses evident in children's reintegration programming as implemented in the DRC.

Young people in the Kivus are well aware of these categorisations of vulnerability and victimhood and are knowledgeable that portraying themselves as vulnerable may increase their chances of receiving access to material assistance. Relying on weakness as a tactic demonstrates how the “very ancient art of ‘making do’” (de Certeau 1984, p. 30) also relates to how young people use the international child protection regime to their advantage. By emphasising their weakness and vulnerability in order to ‘subvert’ the order from within (ibid., p. 32), young people have learnt that portrayals of vulnerability can be reappropriated for material gain. Recalling two of the narratives shared in earlier chapters, there was A-, whose biographical narrative was discussed in Chapter 3, who portrayed herself as an orphan in order to access NGO assistance even if her parents were alive, or N-, discussed in Chapter 4, who used the narrative of her abduction experience with the FDLR to receive help in paying her school fees even though her family was relatively wealthy and could have afforded to support her. Prior to my fieldwork, I had also witnessed how young people would claim former association with an armed group even if they had never been part of one in order to access the DDR programme and to benefit from material assistance.

In their efforts to gain as much as possible from the international child protection regime when provided the opportunity, my research participants demonstrated how they are able to balance their experiences of violence and vulnerability in ways that might offer the greatest rewards. As introduced in Chapter 2, the tactical use of vulnerability has been termed ‘victimcy’ by Utas (2003, 2005), the third variation of victimhood which this thesis considers in relation to young people’s coping mechanisms.¹¹⁰ This variation of victimhood interacts directly with the international child protection regime, as young people rely on portrayals of vulnerability in order to increase their chances of gaining access to material support or of being able to benefit from social services which may be offered by child protection actors.

Victimcy requires a refined capacity for evaluating differentials in power and the possibilities that may be presented through portrayals of weakness. It is a concept which can be linked to Goffman’s (1959) notion of ‘symbolic interactionism’, which describes the ways that individuals present themselves depending on their reading of the audience they face.¹¹¹ It is also related to the psychological concept of ‘proxy agency’- or the act of engaging others with greater power to achieve desired outcomes (Bandura 2001). Victimcy operates “in relation to a social field” which is “highly dependent on specific social situations” (Utas 2005, p. 407). It consciously interacts with the structures of violence in which it is embedded, and is particularly relevant in contexts where international humanitarian aid interventions are conducted. As explained by Utas (2005, p. 409), victimcy

cannot be interpreted apart from an understanding of the interaction context within which such presentations are made... From the informant's point of view, there is much to gain by supplying a complete victim image. Such an image is intended to rid the person of social blame in a particular moral landscape and creates a platform for both social (re)acceptance and socio-economic possibilities. A victim image opens up possibilities not only for partaking

¹¹⁰ The first variation of victimhood being the portrayal of weakness in order to gain access to patronage support as discussed in Chapter 5, and the second variation being the victim-perpetrator discourses and perspectives of blame examined in Chapter 6.

¹¹¹ As was described in Chapter 5 with regard to young people’s efforts to gain patron support, Goffman examines how one portrays oneself to others in certain ways towards the achievement of desired results.

in lucrative emergency aid projects but also for the creation of compassionate bonds with important social actors in both war zone and post-war settings.

Conscious of the structures, spaces and possibilities presented by an international political economy of violence, young people rely on victimcy to make the most of available opportunities provided by external actors. In the aid-saturated context of the Kivus, international humanitarian assistance is usually directed only towards those considered to be the 'most vulnerable'. Assumptions of vulnerability are imposed on specific categories of weakness- such as 'rape victim' or 'child soldier'- with material assistance tied to externally-designated conceptions of vulnerability (see Eriksson Baaz and Stern 2010, MacMillan 2009). Young people in the Kivus are well aware of these categorisations and are knowledgeable that portraying themselves as vulnerable is likely to increase their chances of receiving access to aid. Victimcy thus becomes a key tool in their coping repertoire.

One of my research participants, D-, had been especially successful in appropriating these externally-imposed categorisations of vulnerability as part of her coping processes. She was 22 years old when I met her in 2010 and during our biographical interview she fluently narrated her story:

I'd like to tell you the story about my life, even if it's sad. I try to forget things, but it's not easy...

Look at me, I was born of rape. My mother didn't love my father and I didn't even know him. My mother had 6 children in all... When I was 11 years old, we came to Bukavu...

In 2003, during the fighting, I was taken away by the *Interahamwe*. They took me hostage with another girl, into the forest. It was a Tuesday that day. We were taken to the forest not far from Minova. It's hard for me to talk about this... I was a slave for six men, always the same men. I had to do sexual acts for them, it was so difficult. I couldn't eat, it was such suffering.

One day, after two and a half years, they went to a battle. I was left guarded by only one soldier. I asked the soldier if I could go to bathe; he said I could if I had sex with him first. After I did, I managed to get far away from him, and then I escaped. I hid in the forest for two days, I didn't know where I was. Eventually I found the road, and a car stopped to pick me up and took me to Goma.

Once in Goma, I stayed in the market, I went from house to house, begging, living off charity, trying to find work. One day, when I was returning the washing I had done for a family, I was told by the girl living there to wait for her mother to come so that she could pay me. It turned out that her mother was my elder sister. She had thought that I was dead, my whole family did. She cried, how she cried. When I understood it was my sister, I cried too. She had seen me in the market before, but had thought that I was just a crazy woman begging in the market. I told her it had been my only way to survive. I stayed with her until I returned to my mother in Bukavu.

Eventually I became very sick... and I learnt I was pregnant. Now I have my 5-year-old daughter with me. Like me, she was born of rape...

In 2007 I started at [a local NGO] where I was trained in tailoring. [The same NGO] pays my school fees now. I'm a law student at the university. I dream of becoming a lawyer, to

defend women and children. Girls here suffer too much. My role is to be a messenger for all the girls, all the women, all the young people who have suffered like me...

Since 2007, I've travelled four times to speak to officials and leaders. I've been to Nairobi, to Kinshasa and to Kigali twice. Next week I'll go to Norway to tell my story. My priority now is to advocate for the rights of children born of rape and for those who became mothers against their will. (interview, Bukavu, April 2010)

D- is an impressive person; she is intelligent, articulate and clearly courageous. She had lived through incredibly difficult life experiences, surviving and coping effectively in ways that defy expectation. Having since been provided all the opportunities on offer by the child protection regime- material support, education, training and even international travels- she had turned her experience into something positive and hoped to use her access to Congolese leaders and international audiences to advocate for the needs of other young people. D- was deemed an appropriate target of international child protection support and could therefore benefit from unprecedented opportunities. Her education was fully funded, even to the university level, which is an exceptional privilege for any young person in the DRC. D- was repeatedly invited to speak at international conferences, opportunities which allowed her to travel and extend her horizons further than any of my other research participants could ever even begin to imagine.

D-'s narrative and the way she projected herself, however, left me questioning if there might not be negative consequences of all the support she was receiving from the child protection actors around her. While she was thriving with all the attention, it was attention that was based primarily on her status as a rape victim. Through her narrative and through the discussions we would have throughout my fieldwork period, it was clear that her personal identity was now anchored in her experience of abduction, violence, rape and unwanted motherhood. More cynically, D-'s experience was also extremely useful in supporting the fundraising efforts of the local and international NGOs who actively promoted her to speak at public events and to meet international donors whenever they visited Bukavu.¹¹²

While the often astute and tactical adoption of weakness helps young people to gain access to aid on an opportunistic basis, the reliance on such tactics generally dictates a situation where "the weaker party conforms to the same rationality as the dominant party" (Marriage 2012a). By conforming to the child protection regime's rationality of vulnerability, young people reinforce their position of victimhood and dependence. While portraying oneself as weak and helpless may increase people's chances of receiving material assistance from external actors in the short term, there is a real longer-term risk that they are reinforcing their own positions of weakness and vulnerability.¹¹³

¹¹² On multiple levels, D-'s narrative supports the growing concerns among critical researchers of the current situation in eastern DRC, where rape as an income earning strategy has become evident: "In a context of a corrupt judiciary, rampant poverty, decreasing stigma and the almost total absence of basic health and social services, the focus on sexual violence as a *particularly* serious crime and the resources provided *specifically* for survivors of rape give rise to situations where allegations of rape become a survival strategy." (Eriksson Baaz and Stern 2010, p. 13)

¹¹³ This was similarly seen by Bourgois (2003, p. 9) in his work with Latino men in urban United States: "The street culture of resistance is predicated on the destruction of its participants and the community harboring them. In other words, although street culture emerges out of a personal search for dignity and a rejection of racism and subjugation, it ultimately becomes an active agent in personal degradation and community ruin."

Rationalities of vulnerability apply not only to young people in the Kivus. Throughout my time in the DRC, I repeatedly witnessed how narratives of suffering and loss- while very often true- would be presented to me in the hopes that I might offer some form of material assistance in return. A particularly memorable example of this occurred one day in Bunyakiri, where I was spending the morning with one of my key adult informants, *Soeur F-*. *Soeur F-* is a Catholic nun who had left the convent during the war in order to provide community outreach support and social service work. When I first met her in 2010, she was running a local association that provides shelter to displaced people and connects women who have been raped with the medical assistance, food distributions and psychosocial support projects offered by local and international NGOs. During our conversations, *Soeur F-* would tell me about her experiences during the war and of everyday life, often helping me to make sense of the historical, contextual, cultural and gender dynamics specific to the Bunyakiri context.

That day, *Soeur F-* was deconstructing for me the notion of “rape as a weapon of war” (United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, n.d.) that had gained great currency in the Kivus. At this time, eastern DRC had come to be known internationally as the “rape capital of the world” (BBC 2010, as cited above), a region besieged by an “epidemic” of sexual violence (United Nations News Centre 2010). According to *Soeur F-*, the increase in incidence of rape since the 2009 FARDC-led military operations against the FDLR demonstrated a combination of vengeance between opposing groups, men’s need for affection, and an expression of men’s power over women whose husbands were powerless to protect them. She went on to explain the deep shame women experienced as a consequence: “Women who have been raped won’t talk about it. Their husbands would chase them from their homes.” In the community outreach work that she had conducted since 2002, *Soeur F-* reported to me: “I’ve helped 1,820 women who’ve been raped”, demonstrating the functionally lucrative fascination with numbers that had come to dominate accounts of sexual violence in eastern DRC.¹¹⁴ With distortionary effect, women faced with the constraints of debilitating poverty and absent or unaffordable social services had learnt by 2010 that being a victim of militarised sexual violence would increase their access to services and material benefits provided by international humanitarian aid actors (see Eriksson Baaz and Stern 2010).

Soeur F- interrupted her account as she noticed a woman with her young daughter and baby walking towards the small shaded hut where we were sitting. She called over to them and motioned for them to join us. Timidly, the woman approached and in response to the strong urging by *Soeur F-* eventually sat down with us. Her young daughter leaned into her shyly, while her baby fed quietly in her arms. The woman had an empty plastic cup in her hands, and as she and *Soeur F-* spoke with each other, I understood that the woman had come to ask for a cup’s worth of flour, something *Soeur F-* usually offered to women in need of assistance. *Soeur F-* asked me if I would like to hear this woman’s story. “Of course I would,” I responded, “but only if she wants to tell it.”

The woman began her narration, looking directly in my eyes as *Soeur F-* translated:

¹¹⁴ The fascination with numbers seems to preclude any analysis of dynamics surrounding the events. As just one example of the power of the rape discourse in the Kivus today, a series of militarised rapes which occurred in North Kivu in July and August 2010 garnered enormous international UN, NGO and eventually donor attention, being reported in *The New York Times* as follows: “the number [of rapes] reported has grown, to 242 victims from at least 150 concentrated in 13 villages in North Kivu Province, including 28 minors. But... at least 257 more women had been raped elsewhere in North Kivu and South Kivu Provinces, for a total of at least 499 victims...” (MacFarquhar 2010, p.A8)

When the war reached our village, we had to flee. My family and I have lived here by the roadside for several years. We try to get as much food and material aid as we can from the NGOs and [the World Food Programme], but it's never enough. So usually I go back to our plot of land outside the village to cultivate.

Going to the field presents a big risk because in this area there are many armed men who are looking to steal our food. I know the risks, so does my husband, but we have to eat, and so I continue to cultivate.

My husband was attacked during the raid of our village which displaced us here. They destroyed his legs and mutilated his penis. He can no longer work in the fields, so he just stays at home. Now it's up to me to find food for us all. Like a little chicken, I will look for food wherever I can. Each day, I either go to our field, or I come here into town to try to find some food.

It's in going to cultivate our land that I've been raped by armed men. In the last years, I've been raped four different times. You see my daughter here? She's three years old. Last year she was also raped.

The most recent time I was raped was early this year. I was with my baby. The men took her from me and stuck their gun in her vagina. She was already learning to walk, but since then she's become a baby again. She's one-and-a-half-years old, but now it's like she's six months old. Look...

The woman held up her baby daughter and began to remove the cloth which had been wrapped around her. I rapidly intervened: "No need to do that. Really. I don't need to see." The mother and *Soeur F-* insisted. The baby began to cry and I pleaded: "Please, it's not necessary." The baby was screaming now and *Soeur F-*, with great authority, placed her hand on my shoulder: "Claudia, it's important that you see this." There in front of me was the woman's screaming baby, legs opened to display a raw and gaping pink wound of her vagina where the rifle had entered her tiny body. "Do you see?" *Soeur F-* asked me. I nodded silently. Then the mother began to wrap her baby up again, placing her on her breast to soothe her back to sleep.

As our conversation eventually drew to a close and the woman prepared to leave, I did what I had years ago stopped doing: I reached into my pocket and pulled out the US\$20 bill I usually kept with me in case I ever needed to negotiate myself out of a potentially difficult security situation. It was evident that this woman was living in conditions of extreme material need. Going against my research principles and directly contravening my own critique of humanitarian aid contributing to the valorisation of victimhood, I gave the money to the woman as *Soeur F-* and the woman had probably hoped I would. Although I wanted to help this woman and her children, my motivation for giving her the money probably had more to do with an urge to buy myself out of the turgid mix of sadness, helplessness and guilt I was feeling more than a belief that my money might actually make any difference in her life.

Bourdieu (1989, p. 18) explains that within the structures which order and determine the spaces of operation of daily life, "points of view depend on the point from which they are taken, since the vision that every agent has of the space depends on his or her position in that space." Such positionality confirms how victimhood and victimcy are inter-subjective coping mechanisms which

depend on multiple perspectives; on that particular day these perspectives included *Soeur F*’s knowledge of how accounts of rape can be exchanged for material resources, the woman’s narrative of extreme violence, and my emotionally-weighted capacity in the international political economy of violence to give US\$20. This exchange also served as an example of how good intentions and palliative responses can contribute to reinforcing the structures of violence by valorising such experiences of violence without doing anything to engage with the structures themselves.

CONSERVING AND STRENGTHENING THE STRUCTURES OF VIOLENCE

Child protection actors are just one of a constellation of actors operating within the international humanitarian aid system. The critique of the international child protection regime presented in the section above can be fit within the broader literature which critiques international humanitarian aid interventions more generally at the global level (Keen 1994, Slim 1997, Shearer 2000, Duffield 2001, Marriage 2006). This section now examines some of the ways in which the international humanitarian system interacts with the structures of violence in the Kivus and questions how, through processes of simplification and denial, it contributes to strengthening them.

In the Kivus, international humanitarian attention is focussed on the ‘emergencies’ of each day, with actors rapidly responding to emerging crises as if they were new and disconnected from a long history of violence. My own experience in the Kivus offers an example of how a lack of attention to even recent history can render international humanitarian interventions irrelevant: I first arrived in North Kivu in November 2006, when forces of the CNDP rebel movement, then led by General Laurent Nkunda, were positioned just outside of Goma ready to take over the city. At this time, the CNDP had been successful in taking control of large swathes of Masisi and Rutshuru territories in North Kivu, and the possibility of the CNDP capturing North Kivu’s capital of Goma was leading to public terror among the non-Rwandophone Congolese population. To prevent the CNDP’s take-over, the UN peacekeepers deployed helicopter gunships and managed to push the CNDP back into Masisi. More than five years later, in March 2012, the rebellion had resurged, this time manifested as the M23 led by Colonel Sultani Makenga. As in 2006, reports of child recruitment were being issued, massacres were being decried in the international media, and UN peacekeepers were engaging their military gunships (Reliefweb 2012). By December 2012, the M23 had occupied key positions in Rutshuru and Masisi and had temporarily taken over Goma, only to have retreated strategically while awaiting the outcome of political negotiations with the Kinshasa government based in Kampala. In the meantime, the UN and international NGOs had shifted back into ‘emergency response’ mode, resuming their fierce advocacy and fundraising efforts to respond to the urgent protection needs of the civilian population who were again displaced in their hundreds of thousands and still in desperate need of food, non-food and health assistance.¹¹⁵

The lack of attention by the international humanitarian aid system to the history of violence and the structures in which they are embedded could be explained in multiple ways. For example, the apparently systemic amnesia on the part of the international humanitarian aid actors in the Kivus may relate to the relatively short employment contracts and high turn-over among aid workers, or to the constraints of donor timelines that preclude possibilities for analysis and reflection. In my

¹¹⁵ In an interesting twist, the M23 has incorporated the ‘protection of civilians’ discourse in their media outreach efforts, explaining several strategic retreats as giving the UN and the FARDC an opportunity to “secure the civilian population” (Boutellis 2012).

time in the Kivus, I would regularly hear international aid actors justifying their presence in response to a need to “just do something” and the belief that “it would be so much worse without us”. This kind of emotive, morally-derived rationality is witnessed in other war-affected contexts, where interventions are conceived “not from a position of knowledge, but from positions of privilege and passion” (Nordstrom 2004, p. 31). Such “moral indignation” (Prunier 2009, p. 346) obscures the specific role played by international humanitarian aid actors within the international political economy of violence operating in the Kivus.

Rather than understanding the complexity of the situation in the Kivus, there is a prevalent desire among international actors to simplify it, primarily through disaggregation and blame. In terms of disaggregation, people are categorised into manageable caseloads such as ‘child soldiers’, internally displaced people, victims of rape, or other ‘most vulnerable’ people, while types of violence are subdivided into categories such as forced displacement, sexual violence or burning of villages. Responses are then developed by specialised agencies developing specific projects to respond to what are considered to be the most critical needs, with the hope that measureable results will more likely be achieved. On the contrary, however, these disaggregated responses lead to an obscuration of the broader structures of violence in which the conflict and people’s experiences of violence are embedded.

The second way which international humanitarian aid actors- in particular protection actors- attempt to simplify complexity is to cast blame on ‘perpetrators’. As was discussed in Chapter 6, blame serves not only a protective function within an individual’s processes of coping with violence, but also as an effective tool for political leaders to divert public attention from their own lack of effective leadership. Additionally, blame serves a simplifying function in helping international protection actors in their efforts to make sense of the extremely complex and interacting dynamics of violence which prevail in the DRC. Instead of considering the structures of violence in which individual perpetrators are embedded, blame leads to obscuring the larger dynamics of violence which lead to the perpetration of human rights abuses.

An example of the utility- and danger- of blame is evident in the work of the International Criminal Court, where, at the time of this writing, there were five (of 17) cases which relate to the DRC (International Criminal Court 2012a). In March 2012, the Court’s first conviction was passed on Thomas Lubanga Dyilo, a Congolese militia commander found guilty of enlisting and conscripting children under the age of 15 years to his forces, a war crime for which he was subsequently sentenced to 14 years of prison (International Criminal Court 2012b). While placing responsibility for war crimes on one person may have served broader political interests and expedencies,¹¹⁶ it has also consequently absolved all the other actors in the international political and economic system who facilitated the fierce battles which took place in north-east DRC between 2002- 2003 (see Clark 2008b). As argued in the security literature, the act of individualising security claims takes them out of the political domain (Hansen 2000); in this way, the ICC’s focus on blaming individuals obscures what is, in fact, a deeply political agenda progressing at the global level.

Such attempts to simplify profoundly complex and interlocking processes of violence exemplify how international humanitarian actors sustain- and in some cases worsen- the very conditions which

¹¹⁶ See Clark 2008b for an in-depth discussion of the limitations of the ICC’s approach in the DRC.

they are trying to ameliorate. One of my research participants once asked: “Why do the UN and NGOs only respond to victims, but not try to stop the violence itself?” (focus group discussion, Bunyakiri, April 2010). This question lends itself to a security analysis (Hansen 2000, Marriage 2012b, Marriage 2013), in which the perspective on international discourse and actions is shifted away from “helping” victims of violence towards discourse and actions which might contribute to “changing the relationships of threat and protection that reinforce insecurity” (Marriage 2012b). By continuing its simplistic responses, the international humanitarian aid system does not engage in the inherently political work which would be needed to change the structures of violence in the DRC. Instead, the international humanitarian system continues to act and react, responding to disaggregated needs and being motivated by moral drives and good intentions, all while disregarding its own role in conserving the structures of violence.

Worse than being merely ineffective, international humanitarian aid actions also contribute to weakening progress in effective state-building, reinforcing the DRC as “a state in receivership” (Prunier 2009, p. 305 cited Willame 2007). As described with regard to development interventions more generally, states like the DRC which are so reliant on external aid remain “condemned to perpetual crisis” (Duffield 2005, p. 156). While ostensibly saving lives in the short term, the massive presence of humanitarian actors spending significant funds each year in the DRC has contributed very little positive change:

There were more people internally displaced in 2010 than at the end of 2006. Armed groups, including the Congolese army, relentlessly commit horrific violations of human rights. The Congo has dropped twenty places (from 167 to 187) in the Index of Human Development, officially becoming the least developed country on earth. Overall, current conditions for the populations of the eastern Congo remain among the worst in Africa. (Autesserre 2012, p. 2)

The unwillingness to acknowledge the failures of international humanitarian aid interventions in the Kivus can be considered through the lens of denial. Described as that which is “known and not known at the same time” (Cohen 2001, p. 79), the concept of denial has similarly been taken up by Nordstrom (2004) to highlight the importance of interrogating the gaps between knowledge and acknowledgement. Marriage (2006) has also explored the way in which denial is relevant in the context of aid interventions in the DRC, showing how a certain approach to humanitarian intervention often “passes for pragmatism, but conscripts the idealism (or surrealism) that significant impact can be made with insignificant contributions” (ibid., p. 225). Denial allows for the entrepreneurs of violence to continue their manipulations without restriction, while the international humanitarian aid system scrambles to decry and denounce the newest wave of violence, apportioning their own disaggregated sectorial responses without any engagement in the overarching structures which allow this violence to continue. As critiqued in other contexts, the flurry of international humanitarian activities which mobilise in response to ‘emergencies’ offer a “false sense that something was being done, preventing discussion and analysis around what really needed doing” (Levine and Chastre 2004, p. 19).

An analysis of what needs doing can only begin with an appreciation of the depth and complexity of the structures of violence operating in the Kivus. Yet currently any discussion has been silenced, as possibilities for political mobilisation towards changing the structures of violence have been severely

weakened by the structures of violence themselves. As argued by Hansen (2000, p. 306): “Silence is a powerful political strategy that internalises and individualises threats thereby making resistance and political mobilisation difficult”. The international humanitarian aid system’s continued reliance on discourses of vulnerability and practices which valorise victimhood is part of this process of silencing and in this way contributes to further weakening possibilities for resistance and change.

My research participants are well aware of how deeply embedded they are in the structures of violence, and their perspectives on the possibility of change in the Kivus are bleak. During one of our discussions about aspirations for the future, a young woman explained why she could not imagine a different kind of future:

My life is difficult. Both of my parents are poor, we haven’t been able to study. I’m the eldest of 7 children- I’m 17 years old now... I try to find whatever work wherever I can. I work for whoever offers a job, carrying loads, cultivating in their fields... Even though the war has ended here, life isn’t easier. I see how hard my mother works. For me it’s the same. It will always be the same, nothing changes... (interview, Mushinga, May 2010)

It is clear that international humanitarian actors have their own role to play in shifting their discourses and changing the way they act if there is ever to be a change in the structures of violence operating in the DRC. If not, as has been seen in other contexts of violence, well-intentioned interventions will only continue to serve “the function of legitimization and distraction from inequalities” (Uvin 1998, p. 155), acting “like the whistle on a pressure cooker. They divert and sublimate political rage and make sure that it does not build to a head...” (Roy 2010, p. 85). Until the international humanitarian aid system- including the child protection regime- begin to acknowledge and seriously engage with the structures of violence which dominate and determine so many aspects of young people’s lives in the Kivus today, little in terms of the structures of violence operating there will change.

CONCLUSION

This concluding chapter presents a discussion on the overarching theoretical and policy implications of this thesis and highlights possibilities for future research.

RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

The ‘structures of violence’ analytical framework established by this thesis presents an interdisciplinary approach to the study of violence. By considering the compound and interconnecting expressions of violence operating in the Kivus, the thesis has eschewed any attempt at simplified explanations; rather, the approach has been to highlight the deep ambiguity of violence. The ‘structures of violence’ perspective allows for a simultaneous analysis of the historic origins of violence, its manifestation in the present, its pragmatic functions and its subjective interpretations. For example, by examining how colonial-era violence has been transposed into the present, how access to and competition over land and natural resource wealth are contested on identity-based terms, and how conditions of entrenched poverty can motivate armed mobilisation, the inter-linked and interacting processes of violence in the Kivus become evident. This thesis also offers empirical evidence in support of Bourdieu’s (2000) theory of the ‘law of conservation of violence’. By tracing the historic foundations of violence, how it manifests in the present through individual, social and political processes, and how it may influence the future, this thesis has shown how violence does not disappear but is conserved and transferred. These theoretical findings on violence have important implications for understanding the coping processes relied upon by young people in their experiences of violence.

A significant finding of this research relates to the theoretical relevance of resilience in contexts of deep and protracted violence. Although the initial objective of this research had been to engage with resilience theory in a way that would make it relevant for understanding how young people cope with their experiences of adversity in the Kivus, it soon became evident that resilience theory is not adaptable to a context of such profound violence. According to theory, for an individual to be considered ‘resilient’ they need to express a capacity for positive adaptation and to manifest the abilities to ‘thrive’ and to do well in conditions of risk and adversity. As demonstrated by my research participants, however, positive adaptations and the capacity to thrive are extremely difficult if not impossible within the structures of violence which dominate life in the Kivus.

Going beyond resilience theory, this thesis has therefore presented an elaborated framework for examining how young people cope with violence. Through this multi-dimensional approach, it has been possible to examine the complex ways in which young people engage with structures over which they have little or no capacity to influence or change, and how they variously deploy different coping mechanisms depending on the circumstances they face at any given time. The key finding emerging from this analysis of young people’s coping processes is that the capacity to effectively cope with violence in the short term can lead to greater risks and further subjugation to violence in the long term. At the individual level, tactics associated with *la débrouille* allow young people to survive the present; however, young people are so busy dealing with the challenges of each day that they are not able to invest in any kind of improved future. Through strategies of submission, young people yield to violence perpetrated against them by agents of the state or other armed elements in

order to save their lives in the immediate term, even as these acts of submission reinforce their positions of weakness. Similarly, the tactics of victimhood deployed by young people may help them to gain access to material support from patrons or aid actors in the short term, but at the same time reinforce their position of dependence and reproduce the inequalities inherent in the Congolese structures of violence. Recalling Bourgois' contention that "people do not simply 'survive' violence as if it somehow remained outside of them" (Bourgois 2001, p. 29 as cited in Chapter 1), these coping mechanisms demonstrate how violence becomes incorporated by young people, and how, through their coping mechanisms, violence is conserved.

Another key finding of this research is that the processes of meaning attribution which are a central aspect of how individuals psychologically cope with their experiences of adversity can also contribute to the conservation of violence. As was demonstrated through this research, the subjective and symbolic ways in which meaning is attributed to and derived from violence in the Kivus relies heavily on identity-based, victim-perpetrator discourses in which blame is ascribed to a perpetrating 'other'. These discourses are functionally effective both at the individual and the political levels, being psychologically helpful and politically expedient. At the individual level, blame allows young people to explain or justify being in a situation which they feel powerless to control, and provides a sense of coherence to experiences of violence. Politically, adopting a victim position through strategies of blame allows political leaders to deflect public attention away from ineffective governance. The externalisation of responsibility which is the corollary of blame contributes to reinforcing positions of weakness and powerlessness, while transferring distrust and hatred across generations. This externalisation also prevents individuals from attempting to engage in the political actions which would be needed to begin changing the structures of violence which prevail in the Kivus, again contributing to the conservation of violence.

These theoretical findings have multiple implications for policy, in general terms but particularly with regard to international humanitarian and protection interventions which are carried out in the Kivus. Firstly, the critical perspective on resilience presented in this thesis is relevant for the field of international relief and development, where there is now increasing attention being given to resilience (Pantuliano et al. 2013). This shift towards resilience is a concerted move away from vulnerability-based perspectives which have long dominated aid discourse. It represents an optimistic approach which aims to reinforce existing coping mechanisms among populations benefitting from assistance, to reduce their dependence on aid and to empower locally-sustainable development outcomes (Manyena 2006). Yet as this research has demonstrated, an emphasis on resilience is problematic as it places the responsibility for well-being on individuals who are expected to be 'self-reliant' (Duffield 2005, 2007). Such displacement of responsibility from the political to the individual obscures the conditions of risk and adversity under which people are surviving and elides the reality that within the structures of violence- where even basic social services are difficult to access- self-reliance may be impossible.¹¹⁷ In this way, the focus on resilience depoliticises the structures of violence which dominate everyday life and precludes analysis on the political actions which would be required to make the structural changes to reduce the violence.

¹¹⁷ This critique of resilience corresponds with Duffield's (2007) evaluation of self-reliance (as described in Chapter 7 above) which denounces as unrealistic and racist the development perspective that the world's excluded populations will be satisfied with basic needs and stability. He notes: "The continuing toll of malnutrition, preventable disease and illiteracy, together with the rising flow of people looking for a better life or fleeing a bad one, graphically illustrates *the impossibility of self-reliance*." (ibid, p. 70, italics in the original)

The critique of resilience that emerges in this thesis relates to a similar critique of child protection approaches which focus on young people's agency. As with resilience, there is a growing- if still limited and at times contradictory- trend within child protection practice to emphasise the agency of young people and to encourage their participation in child protection programmes (see Hart 2004). This emphasis aims to empower young people but instead risks obscuring the overwhelming constraints they face. In the Kivus, the structures of violence can be so overpowering that agency is not possible. Rather, what is seen among young people in the Kivus are coping mechanisms- such as *la débrouille* or victimhood- which might be conceived of as a form of extremely limited agency in the sense that choices are being made. Yet as the coping outcomes have not allowed young people to influence the established structures of violence, then they cannot be considered as true expressions of agency. For policy makers, it is important to make the distinction that the tactical expressions of coping evidenced in the Kivus are not the same as agency. Such a distinction should contribute to shifting policy attention back to the conditions of pervasive and entrenched violence which preclude the possibilities of long-term positive adaptations for young people in the Kivus.

The theoretical contribution of the structures of violence analysis could be especially relevant for the international actors which are heavily present and deeply implicated in the dynamics of violence in the Kivus, notably the UN, donor governments from the global North and international NGOs. By examining the complex ways in which contemporary violence is rooted in the past and is expressed in multiple, interacting ways in the present, current responses to violence could be reconceived and reformed to become more relevant in improving the living conditions of the Congolese population, which is the ostensible aim of these actors. Rather than embracing complexity, however, many international actors in the Kivus rely on reductionist analyses of violence, leading to responses which are at best inadequate and which at worst contribute to reinforcing the structures of violence.¹¹⁸

There are myriad examples of how reductionist analyses and palliative, project-based reactions continue to dominate internationally-led responses to the violence. One prominent example is the child protection regime's approach to children associated with armed groups. Discussed in depth in Chapter 7 above (see also Seymour 2011c), the mobilisation of young people to armed groups would be helpfully analysed from a structures of violence perspective. By first considering the structural conditions of poverty and adversity which prevail in the Kivus- from school fees which are unaffordable for an education that is any case inadequate, to an economic system that offers few opportunities for young people to engage in sustainable livelihood activities- then greater understanding is offered on why young people may choose to join an armed group with the material rewards it offers. By next acknowledging the persistence of armed groups in the Kivus and the general belief that to achieve political power or influence or to protect oneself or one's community that recourse to arms is needed, then a different logic on the relevance of armed groups can be recognised. By finally appreciating the weakness of social support networks after years of political and structural violence, and the essential role of patronage ties for entering the local economy, then a new perspective is gained on the kinds of socio-economic support that might help young people. In these ways, a structures of violence perspective illuminates the complexity of the phenomenon of young people's association with armed groups and provides a framework for analysing how more relevant and appropriate DDR programmes might be developed.

¹¹⁸ As noted by Duffield (2007, p. vii): "The benevolence with which development cloaks itself- its constant invocation of rights, freedom and the people- conceals a stubborn will to manage and contain disorder rather than resolve it."

A structures of violence perspective might also contribute to reconceiving the disaggregated approaches to violence and the assumptions of vulnerability and projections of victimhood which are currently favoured by international protection actors.¹¹⁹ As shown through this research, young people do not fit into the neat victim categories imposed by external actors; for example, among my research participants were those who had left home to work in the mines or who had willingly chosen to join an armed group- rather than expressing vulnerability, these young people were demonstrating their capacities for self-protection. Assuming vulnerability can negate the often astute capacities of young people to navigate adverse situations in the most effective way possible. Assuredly, certain young people are vulnerable, but their unique situation requires careful evaluation to understand the conditions leading to their vulnerability. Furthermore, it is important to note that young people in the Kivus are aware of the value of the label of 'vulnerability' in gaining access to child protection project support; they have consequently reappropriated and incorporated vulnerability within their repertoire of coping responses. This tactical adoption of weakness can help young people gain access to aid on an opportunistic basis, but by conforming to the child protection regime's rationality of vulnerability, young people inadvertently reinforce their victim status and thus contribute to weakening their coping capacities in the long term.

Furthermore, without an adequate analysis and appreciation of the interconnecting manifestations of violence operating in the Kivus, there is a real risk that interventions which aim towards building peace instead contribute to greater harm. For example, the UN peacekeeping mission's current guiding assumption is that by neutralising armed groups in the Kivus, peace will be achieved.¹²⁰ Yet this assumption is problematic as it ignores the structures which underlie armed mobilisation. While from a functional perspective groups such as the CNDP/ M23 or Mayi-mayi may be fighting for control of resources and wealth, their varying claims about land, citizenship, and self-defence- claims which are deeply rooted in Congolese political history- are also legitimate. Without seriously engaging with these claims and supporting the legal and institutional reforms necessary to redress contested access to land, provide clarity on citizenship, and ensure the physical security of the population, then the claims remain valid and violence can be expected to continue. By attempting to end the violence in the Kivus through militarised force, the UN contributes to reinforcing the structures of violence.

The consequent legitimization of violence by the UN contributes to reinforcing a political system in which violence begets violence. According to my research participants, the only way in which Congolese can engage politically and have their voices heard is by adopting strategies of violence: "here, without force, we have no power" (interview, Mushinga, May 2010). Beyond their everyday

¹¹⁹ As described in Chapter 7, international protection responses to sexual violence- which are disaggregated from analyses of broader violence in the Kivus and which have become tied with the distribution of material goods and provision of health and socio-economic support- have led to significant distortions of social relations and judicial functioning in the Kivus.

¹²⁰ The UN peacekeeping mission has been present in eastern DRC since 1999. Its 20,000-strong military force was, in March 2013, mandated to deploy a 'specialised intervention brigade' which will "consist of three infantry battalions, one artillery and one special force and reconnaissance company and operate under direct command of the MONUSCO Force Commander, with the responsibility of neutralizing armed groups and the objective of contributing to reducing the threat posed by armed groups to state authority and civilian security in eastern DRC..." (United Nations 2013).

experiences within the structures of violence which has taught them this lesson, persistent international engagement in the Kivus has reinforced this knowledge.¹²¹

The lack of attention to the structures of violence is a key factor which contributes to the maintenance of the structures. In this way, reflection on the processes and mechanisms through which violence is conserved would be useful for international protection actors, especially in terms of how their own actions may contribute to the dynamics of violence in the Kivus. By applying reductionist analyses and implementing palliative projects, the structures through which violence is conducted and transferred are obscured and attention is diverted away from the political work that would be needed to effectively address the iterative cycles of “crisis” in the Kivus.¹²² International protection actors would do well to question much more seriously the potential impacts their interventions in the Kivus may be having in the longer term. On the few occasions in which I would hear such questioning by aid actors on the relevance of international humanitarian and protection approaches as currently conceived, explanations for their continuing lack of positive impact would include an inability to influence donor governments, limitations imposed by a dysfunctional host government, the challenges faced in working with corrupt and unaccountable systems, or the difficulty of working in an environment constrained by violence-induced insecurity. Such justifications merely obscure the more profound dysfunctions of the international aid system itself and reveal how strategies which attempt to address only one aspect of the violence, or projects which are developed based on superficial understandings of violence will not achieve their stated aims. To contribute to the reduction of violence in the Kivus, the structures must first be understood- only then might the political work required to restructure the existing order begin.¹²³

FUTURE RESEARCH

On concluding this thesis, two main directions for further research are evident- longitudinal research and comparative studies. Such future work would likely contribute to significant additional knowledge on young people’s experiences of and means of coping with violence.

LONGITUDINAL STUDIES OF COPING

The very nature of coping processes means that studying them requires longer-term perspectives. A more comprehensive and robust exploration of young people’s coping processes would therefore need to be longitudinal, taking place over an extended period, ideally following young people into their adulthood. As coping is by its nature a long-term process, longitudinal research would contribute insights to and understandings of how the structures of violence have defined the life courses of young people, and how their experiences of violence influence future generations. Only

¹²¹ For example, the internationally-supported formal peace negotiations which ended the 1998- 2003 war gave political power to those who succeeded militarily (see Marriage 2013).

¹²² The way in which the situation in the Kivus is narrated in international aid discourse also contributes to conserving violence. For example, as critiqued in Chapter 7, the international humanitarian discourse describes human suffering in the Kivus in terms which usually tend towards the sensational- e.g. eastern DRC is described as “the world’s deadliest humanitarian crisis” (Coghlan et al. 2006, p. 44 as cited in Chapter 1) and “the rape capital of the world” (BBC 2010 as cited in Chapter 1), where “5.4 million” people have died (International Rescue Committee)- such simplistic discourse aims to raise alarm and thus funding among Northern donors and their constituents, but creates greater harm by preventing analysis of the structural and political causes of this suffering.

¹²³ As stated by Macrae et al. (1997, p. 240): “humanitarian aid cannot substitute for political action. The fact that it is so difficult to move beyond relief is primarily due to the lack of progress at the political level.”

with a longer-term perspective could more definitive conclusions be advanced in relation to young people's capacities for coping with violence within a constantly changing social, political and economic reality.

The importance of studying coping mechanisms over longer periods of time only became evident to me in the year following the completion of my formal fieldwork period in South Kivu. On return visits to each of my fieldwork sites in 2011, I was surprised to find that the young people who I had previously considered to be coping comparatively more effectively than others were- one year later- struggling to deal with their current life situations. In Bukavu, Emile, who throughout our work together in 2010 had impressed me with his positive disposition and outlook as well as his eagerness to create new opportunities for himself, had become far less hopeful about his prospects for the future. T- who in 2010 was being hosted by her older sister, in her second year of university and doing small jobs to pay for her son's school fees, had in 2011 been forced to move out of her sister's house, dropped out of university and was barely able to meet her survival needs at the end of each month.

In Bunyakiri, I was able to meet again with seven of the eight young participants of the 2010 research cohort. Most of them expressed a similar sense of heaviness to what I had witnessed among my research participants in Bukavu, although their outlooks were even further darkened by the worsening conditions of military violence in Kalehe Territory. The continuing lack of jobs and prevailing insecurity left them as dependent as they had been the year before. This situation was especially regretted by young men: they were one year older yet no closer to achieving the material independence and stability they would need to begin preparing themselves for marriage and their own families. For example, in 2010 L- had been living with his older brother who had also been paying for his secondary school education; following the death of his brother early in 2011, L- had become responsible for ensuring the survival needs of his brother's wife and his four nephews and nieces. To meet his new family obligations, L- had dropped out of secondary school and was teaching at a private primary school, while his hope for a better future through formal education had disappeared. G-, the youngest of the Bunyakiri cohort at 15 years old, was in 2011 expecting a child, a situation she deeply regretted as the father had fled to Bukavu in order to avoid paying the bride price; she had been obliged to drop out of school and felt ashamed by the prospect of becoming a single mother.

On the contrary, N-, the young woman whose narrative was shared in Chapter 1, surprised me in how evidently well she seemed to be faring compared to the year before. Her young daughter, who had fallen extremely ill on several occasions throughout my 2010 fieldwork period, had managed to grow into a smiling and rather healthy-looking toddler. N- was still facing the constraints of structural poverty, still toiling each day in the fields, still facing the emotional abuse of her brother's wife, and still living in precarious physical conditions, yet she managed to maintain a courageous outlook towards the future. While she knew not to expect that life would ever offer much different or better, she was pleased with her ability to meet her child's survival needs and expressed a sense of accomplishment as a mother. N-'s capacity to deal with the challenges of each day was an expression of coping as effectively as she could within the structures of violence which still dominate the spaces of her life.

A longer-term enquiry would also likely provide further insights into Bourdieu's law of conservation of violence, showing how violence is conserved and transformed. It would allow for on-going comparison between the individual capacities to cope within changing social and political conditions. Little long-term qualitative research has been conducted in eastern DRC, and documentation of daily experiences over time and based on emic perspectives would make a significant contribution to various disciplinary investigations into the conditions of life there.

COMPARATIVE STUDIES

Comparative research would also likely make a significant contribution to theory and practice. In terms of comparative research in the Kivus, it would be interesting to explore in greater depth the lives of young people who are doing well. Although all of my research participants were struggling within the structures of violence, in my time in the Kivus I did meet some young people who seemed to be doing well despite living within the structures of violence. It seems that the conditions which allowed them to do well were primarily economic: these young people lived in urban areas, were educated and had parents who were employed, often with the UN or an international NGO. It would be interesting in terms of the psychological literature to further examine the connections between resilience and economic well-being. Additionally, these young people represent an elite with access to resources and opportunities and may eventually represent the next generation of Congolese power-holders, or at least those who will be able to influence power. Examining their experiences and perspectives would offer another dimension for understanding how the structures of violence in the Kivus are either conserved or transformed.

It would also be interesting to conduct an analysis which compares the findings of this research project with other contexts of entrenched structural violence and protracted political crises. This research project was influenced by studies of young people in other contexts, for example in Palestine and South Africa, both contexts where young people have politically engaged in the structures of violence in ways which are highly divergent from the case of the DRC. Juxtaposing the divergent factors- which are embedded in history and culture and all the other elements which make each context unique- with the realities of an increasingly interconnected world would likely offer insights about how the international political economy influences and is influenced by the experiences of young people- or not.

EPILOGUE

As this thesis has shown, the structures of violence in the DRC are so powerful and so deeply founded that possibilities for change seem to face tremendous- and perhaps insurmountable- challenges. As was stated by Fanon, structural and political change must be willed at the local, individual level:

... the proof of success lies in a whole social structure being changed from the bottom up. The extraordinary importance of this change is that it is willed, called for, demanded. The need for this change exists in its crude state, impetuous and compelling, in the consciousness and in the lives of [men and women]... (Fanon 1967, p. 27)

Yet as evident in the narratives of my research participants, the submission, defeat and struggles to survive each day currently occupy too much space in the lives of young people to easily imagine how they would be able to mobilise the political force which would be needed to effectively challenge the structures of violence which dominate life in the Kivus.

Despite the overwhelming power of the structures in which they are embedded, many of the young people who participated in this research gave willingly of their time and their stories with a sincere hope that their offering might bring something of good, if not for themselves, at least eventually for others. As Emile urged early on in my fieldwork period: “*Madame Claudia*, you must work very hard to make sure you get our stories out, to influence people...” (interview, April 2010, Bukavu). On my return visit to Bukavu in 2011, one year after I had ended my fieldwork there, Emile wanted to know if I had finished my doctorate, if it had been published, and if their stories had gotten out yet; in other words, he was asking me if I had fulfilled what he considered to be my obligation as a researcher. I asked him for more time. Emile is aware of the world beyond the DRC and hopes that his story might be heard by others who could make a positive difference in his life and in the lives of other young people.

Emile is not alone, and as the years have gone on I continue to receive regular email messages from the young people and adults who participated in this research project along the way; they are encouraging and expectant and offer evidence that the will to change as prescribed by Fanon may exist. Yet this change cannot come from them alone. As this thesis has shown, the structures of violence operating in the Kivus extend outwards and are equally reinforced by the international political economy. Changing the structures therefore requires the informed demand and concerted will for change at multiple levels, including among international aid actors whose presence irrevocably if inadvertently makes them part of the violence which defines the spaces and the orders of life in the Kivus.

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